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THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF Saint Francis of Assisi

TRANSLATED BY ABBY LANGDON ALGER



DECORATED BY VALENTI ANGELO FOR
THE PETER PAUPER PRESS • MOUNT VERNON

C FROM THE TRANSLATOR'S ESSAY OF INTRODUCTION

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Saint Francis was born in 1182, in the little town of Assisi, in Umbria. His mother, Madonna Pica, was of noble race, and his father, Peter Bernardone, was a rich merchant, who was travelling in France on business at the time Francis was born. Many strange tales are told of the omens attending the little boy's advent into the world. For some time previous a poor man roamed the streets of Assisi crying aloud, "Peace and prosperity! peace and prosperity!" His mother was ill for many days, nor were her sufferings relieved, until by the advice of a pilgrim who came that way she was laid on a bed of straw in a stable. Thus began that likeness between the life of Francis and that of Christ, which was continued throughout. Another stranger appeared to act as godfather, and still another took the baby in his arms and, marking his right shoulder with a cross, foretold the victory which he was to win over the Devil. Madonna Pica named her child John, in memory of the beloved disciple; but on his father's returns with rich profits, he chose to call him Francis, for the country where he had been so successful.

The boy was taught by the priests of the parish, and learned easily all that was taught him, showing an especial talent for the language of the land from which he took his name. As he grew to manhood he was foremost in the gayeties of the town, winning for himself the sobriquet of the "flower of youth."

Thomas of Celano, a Franciscan brother, and a dear friend of Francis, describes him thus: "He was of middle stature, rather under than over, with an oval face and full but low forehead, his eyes dark and clear, his hair thick, his eyebrows close, a straight and delicate nose, a voice soft yet keen and fiery;

close, equal, and white teeth; lips modest yet subtle; a black beard not thickly grown; a thin neck, square shoulders, short arms, small hands and feet, delicate skin, and little flesh." So elegant was his dress, and so luxurious were his tastes, that his parents often said, "He is more like the son of a prince than like our son." Still, they were proud of his splendor, and grudged him nothing, though his charities were as lavish as his pleasures: no beggar ever asked of him in vain.

When he had reached the age of twenty-four, however, a war broke out between Assisi and Perugia. Francis was taken prisoner, and for a year languished in captivity. Returning home, he suffered from a long and tedious illness which proved a turning-point in his career. He began to long for something better and higher than mere amusement. It was the age of knighthood, and his first thought was to redress wrong and help the weak. He set out to join the forces of the Count de Brienne, described as a man of great magnificence and liberality; but stopping at Spoleto, he was warned in a dream to return home, which he did in a state of melancholy and absorption. He now began to devote himself more entirely to the sick and poor, particularly the lepers, of whom there were many at that time.

Going one day to the ruined Church of St. Damian's, an inward voice bade him repair it. At once he hurried home, and his father being away, took a quantity of merchandise, which he sold, offering the price for the work of restoration. The priest refusing, he threw it in a corner, where it lay until the angry Peter Bernardone came to claim it and to imprison his headstrong son. His mother finally freeing him, he sought refuge with the priest of St. Damian's, restoring to his father all that he had received from him, even his clothes, stripping himself to the hair shirt which he had worn in secret, and renouncing his father forever. Thenceforth he begged material to repair the church, building it up with his own hands, and collecting broken

scraps of food from the charitable, for his maintenance. In this way, in the course of two years he restored three churches and gained twelve disciples, the first being Bernard of Quintavalle. Within eleven years these twelve grew to more than five thousand. They were vowed to abject poverty, owning absolutely nothing, thus differing from the other ecclesiastical bodies then in existence.

But it would be a misconception to assume that the Franciscan friars were essentially beggars. Poverty, not mendicancy, was the ideal of St. Francis, who repeatedly urged the friars to earn their living by honest work. "I worked with my hands," he states in the Testament, "and desire to work. I steadfastly will and desire that all the friars work at some honorable handicraft; and as for those that know none, let them learn — not for the sake of the price of their labor, but for example and to eschew idleness. And when we can obtain nothing for our labor, then we may have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door."

Francis next founded the Order of Poor Ladies, afterwards known as the Poor Clares, in honor of their first abbess, Clara Sciffi, a beautiful heiress, who left her home at the age of fifteen to enter upon a religious life. Later still the third Order was established, which was open to men and women alike, and meant for those who lived in the world. These three Orders spread rapidly throughout the globe, Saint Francis travelling even into Syria.

After enduring every privation and sorrow for many years, as well as many nameless raptures in his spiritual intercourse with God, he saw, as he prayed upon a lonely mountain, a vision of Christ crucified; and as he gazed, his body became stamped with the Stigmata, or marks of the Passion of our Lord, which he thenceforth bore until his death, some two years after, October 4, 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age.

The chief quality of Saint Francis — the central and characteristic charm which has made him perhaps the best beloved of all the illustrious members of the calendar — is the depth and tenderness of his heart. His gentle and generous affection was constantly overflowing on all around him, in sympathetic attention, poetic expressions, and acts of endearment. The objects of his intense and exuberant love were not only God, angels, and men, but also animals, birds, insects, and even inanimate objects, which he was wont to address as his brothers and sisters, in reference to their common origin with himself. Many charming instances of his friendships with fish, falcons, swallows, lambs, wolves, hares, and grasshoppers, may be found in these "Little Flowers," and in the various Lives of him.

He was first to establish the custom still prevalent in Catholic countries, of representing the Nativity in the stable at Bethlehem, at Christmas time, before the altar. He was also among the earliest of Italian poets; for in those days Italian was only the vulgar tongue, Latin or the soft Provençal being used for literary purposes. He improvised many ardent hymns and songs, which he taught to his followers, the most widely known being the "Canticle to the Sun," or "Song of the Creatures," and "Love sets my Heart on Fire."

The *Little Flowers* are a series of legends which were collected some two hundred years after his death, having been handed down by word of mouth until that time. They form an excellent biography of him and his disciples, told with quaint simplicity and grace. The translator has tried to preserve the *naïveté* and antique flavor of the original text (as printed by Antonio Cesari, with some emendations from Passerini) in the present version.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Chapter One

IN THIS BOOK ARE CONTAINED CERTAIN LITTLE FLOWERS, MIRACLES, AND DEVOUT EXAMPLES OF THAT GLORIOUS POOR FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SAINT FRANCIS, AND OF CERTAIN OF HIS HOLY COMPANIONS. TOLD TO THE PRAISE OF JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

WE have first to consider that the glorious Saint Francis in all the acts of his life was like unto Christ, our blessed Lord; for even as Christ in the beginning of His preaching chose to Himself twelve Apostles who should renounce all worldly things and follow after Him in poverty and in other virtuous deeds, even so Saint Francis chose in the beginning of the foundation of his Order twelve companions, vowed to the most abject poverty; and also even as one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, reproved of God, went out and hanged himself by the neck, so one of the twelve Companions of Saint Francis, the same which was called Brother John of the Chapel, did turn apostate, and finally go out and hang himself by the neck. And this is a worthy example for the elect, and a subject for fear and humility, considering that none can be sure of continuing unto the end in the grace of God. And as those holy Apostles were a wonder to all men for their sanctity and humility, and were filled full with the Holy Ghost, so too the most holy companions of Saint Francis were men of so much sanctity, that, from the days of the Apostles down to the present time, the world has known no such wonderful and holy men, insomuch as a certain one among them was snatched up into the third Heaven, like Saint Paul, and that was Brother Guy; a certain one among

them, that is Brother Philip Long, was touched upon the lips by an Angel with a living coal, as was the Prophet Isaiah; a certain one among them, and that was Brother Sylvester, talked with God, as might one friend with another, even as did Moses; a certain one among them did rise by subtlety of intellect even unto the light of divine wisdom, like unto the Eagle, which is John the Evangelist, and this was Brother Bernard, the most humble of men, who did expound the Holy Scriptures most learnedly; a certain one among them was sanctified of God, and canonized in heaven while still living upon this earth, and that was Brother Rufus, a gentleman of Assisi. And thus were all privileged to receive singular signs of sanctity, even as shall be set forth in the following pages.

Chapter Two

OF BROTHER BERNARD OF QUINTAVALLE, THE FIRST COMPANION
OF SAINT FRANCIS.

THE first companion of Saint Francis was one Brother Bernard of Assisi, the same being converted in this fashion; Saint Francis being still clad in secular garb, although he had already renounced the world, and went about despising all vain show, and mortifying his flesh by manifold forms of penitence, insomuch that of many he was held to be half mad, and was scorned as a fool and driven forth with stones and loathing alike by his family and by strangers, and he amidst all insults and injuries remained passive, as if deaf and dumb,—Bernard of Assisi, who was one of the most noble, rich, and wise men of that city, began prudently to consider Saint Francis' exceeding contempt for this world and his great patience amid insults; how that for the space of two long years, being thus

held in abomination and despised of all men, he seemed ever but the more steadfast in his faith. He began to think and to say to himself, "It can in no wise be but that this Brother is possessed of the great grace of God"; and he invited him to sup with him that night and to lodge with him. And Saint Francis accepted his proffers, and supped and lodged with him. And



then did Bernard ponder in his heart and meditate upon his sanctity; whereupon he ordered a bed to be laid for him in his own chamber, wherein a lamp ever burned at night. And Saint Francis desiring to hide his great sanctity, immediately that he entered

the chamber, threw himself upon his bed and feigned sleep; and even so did Bernard, and after a certain space he turned himself over and began to snore loudly, as he were sleeping heavily. For the which thing Saint Francis, truly believing that Bernard slept in his first slumbers, arose from the bed and fell himself upon his knees, lifting both hands and eyes to heaven, and with the utmost fervor and devotion he exclaimed, "My God! my God!" and thus crying and weeping much, he remained until morning, repeating ever, "My God! my God!" and nought else; and thus spake Saint Francis, contemplating and admiring the excellency of the Divine Majesty which had deigned to descend to pardon a perishing world; wherefore Saint Francis became a poor beggar and devoted his life to seeking out some means of salvation for his soul and for souls of others. And still illumined by the Holy Ghost, or else indeed by the spirit of prophecy, foreseeing the great things which the Lord was to do for him and for his Order, and considering his own insufficiency and little virtue, he cried aloud and prayed unto God that of His charity and omnipotence, without which human weakness availeth nought, He would supply, aid, and complete the work which man alone could not achieve.

Bernard, seeing by the light of the lamp these most pious acts of Saint Francis, and considering devoutly the words which he uttered, was touched and inspired of the Holy Ghost to change his life; insomuch that at dawn of day he called unto Saint Francis and said thus: "Brother Francis, my heart is greatly minded to forsake the world and to follow after thee in all things that thou shalt command me." Hearing this, Saint Francis rejoiced in spirit and spake thus: "Bernard, this of which you speak is so great and difficult a task that we must needs take counsel concerning it with Our Lord Jesus Christ, and pray Him that it may please Him to show us His sovereign will in the same, and to teach us how we may execute it; and therefore let us go forth

together to the Episcopal Palace, where we may find a righteous priest, and we will bid him say a mass; there we will remain and pray even unto the third hour of the day, entreating God that even in the three openings of the Missal He will set forth to us the way which it shall please Him to have us go.”

II

Bernard replied that these things liked him well. Thus they set forth and came unto the Bishop’s Palace; and there having heard the Mass, and remained absorbed in prayer even unto the third hour of the day, the priest, at the petition of Saint Francis, took up the Missal, and making the sign of the most Holy Cross, did open it three times in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and at the first opening there appeared these words, which Christ spake in the Gospel unto the young man who asked of Him the way to be perfect: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow Me.” At the second opening there appeared these words uttered by Christ to the Apostles when He sent them forth to preach: “Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves”; desiring thereby to teach them that they should set all their trust in God, and bend their whole thoughts to the preaching of the Holy Gospel; at the third opening of the Missal there appeared these words which Christ spake: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Then said Saint Francis to Bernard, “Behold the counsel which Christ hath given us. Go therefore and do that which you have heard; and blessed be Our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath stopped to show us the way of His gospel.” Hearing this, Bernard went out and sold all that he had,—and he was very rich,—and with great joy did divide all his wealth among widows and orphans, among prisons and monasteries, and among hospitals and pilgrims; and in all things was aided faithfully and providently of Saint Francis.

And a certain man, whose name was Sylvester, seeing that Saint Francis gave so much money to the poor, and continued to give large sums, pinched by avarice, said to Saint Francis, "Never yet have you paid me all that you owe me for those stones that you did buy to repair the church; now therefore that you have money, pay." Then Saint Francis, marvelling much at his avarice, and loath to contend with him, like unto a true observer of the Holy Gospel, did stretch forth his hand into the lap of Bernard, and drawing it out full of money, cast the same into the lap of Sylvester, saying, "If more you desire, yet more will I give you." Sylvester being content with that that he had, went away and returned to his own house; but at evening, pondering on that which he had done that day, and reproaching himself for his avarice, considering the fervor of Bernard and the sanctity of Saint Francis, the following night, and for yet two other nights, God sent him this rare vision: that from the mouth of Saint Francis there issued forth a cross of gold, the top of which reached even unto Heaven, and the arms of which stretched from the East even unto the West. Because of this vision he gave away for love of God all that that he had, and became one of the Gray Friars; and such were his sanctity and grace while in the Order, that he spake with God even as one friend with another, as Saint Francis many times experienced, and as is by him set forth in these pages.

Bernard likewise received great grace from God, forasmuch as he was often transported in the contemplation of God; and Saint Francis said of him that he was worthy of all reverence, and that he was the true founder of this Order, inasmuch as he was the first who forsook the world, keeping nothing for himself, but giving all to Christ's poor; and he set an example of Christian poverty, offering himself naked to the arms of Christ crucified; for which thing may he be blessed *in saecula saeculorum*. Amen.

Chapter Three

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HOW FOR THE EVIL THOUGHTS WHICH SAINT FRANCIS HAD REGARDING BROTHER BERNARD, HE COMMANDED THAT SAME BROTHER BERNARD THAT THREE TIMES HE SHOULD PLACE HIS FEET UPON HIS NECK AND UPON HIS MOUTH.

THAT most devout servant of the Cross, Saint Francis, from severe penance and constant tears had become almost blind and saw but little. Upon one occasion he left the place where he abode and went to that place where Brother Bernard sojourned, to speak with him of divine things. And coming to that place he learned that the Brother was at prayer in the wood, rapt, and conjoined with God. Then Saint Francis went forth into that wood and called aloud, saying, "Come hither and speak to this blind beggar." And Brother Bernard answered him not, forasmuch as, being a man greatly given to meditation, his mind was absorbed in the contemplation of God; and he was strangely favored in converse with God, as Saint Francis had ofttimes proven, and therefore did he desire to have speech with him. After a certain space he called unto him a second and even a third time after the same fashion; and never once did Brother Bernard heed or hear his voice; neither did he make any answer, nor came he forth to meet him; so that Saint Francis departed no little disconsolate, and marvelling and lamenting in his own mind that Brother Bernard, three times called, came not forth to him. Journeying thence with these thoughts, Saint Francis, having gone but a little way, said unto his companion, "Await me here." And he went aside into a solitary place and fell to praying, beseeching God that He would reveal to him wherefore Brother Bernard made not answer unto him. And standing there, he heard a voice from God which

spake these words: "O poor weak soul, why art thou disturbed? Should man leave God for his fellow man? Brother Bernard, when you cried unto him, was conjoined with Me, and hence he could not come to thee, neither could he make answer unto thee; therefore marvel not that he answered thee not, since his soul was so far removed from his body that he heard not any of thy words." Saint Francis, having this answer from God, immediately returned again with much speed to Brother Bernard, humbly to accuse himself of the evil thoughts which he had cherished towards him. And seeing him draw nigh, Brother Bernard went out to meet him and fell down before him; and then Saint Francis raised him up, and with all humility told his thoughts, and the trouble which he had felt concerning him, and how that God had made answer unto him in the matter; hence he concluded thus: "I charge you by your sacred vow of obedience that you do do the things which I shall command you." Brother Bernard, fearing lest Saint Francis should require of him some excessive thing, as was his wont, made honest endeavor to avoid this obedience, answering thus: "I am prepared to obey you meekly, if you will promise me to do that which I in turn shall command of you." And Saint Francis promising him, Brother Bernard said, "Speak, father; bid me what you would have me to do." Then said Saint Francis: "I command you, by your sacred vow of obedience, that, to punish my presumption and the boldness of my heart, now as I throw myself flat upon the ground you place one foot upon my neck and the other upon my mouth, and thus shall you pass three times over my body, crying shame upon me and reviling me; and more especially shall you cry unto me, 'Lie there, thou vile son of Peter Bernardone; whence hast thou acquired such pride, vilest of all creatures that thou art?'" Hearing this, Brother Bernard, hard as was his task, yet for the sake of his sacred vow of obedience, as courteously as he might, did fulfil the will of

Saint Francis, even as he had commanded him; and this done, Saint Francis said: "Do you command me now in turn whatsoever you will that I shall do, inasmuch as I have promised obedience." Then said Brother Bernard, "By your sacred vow of obedience I charge you that as many times as we may hap to be in company you do reprove me and correct me sharply for my sins." At which thing Saint Francis marvelled greatly, seeing that Brother Bernard was a man of great sanctity whom he held in much reverence, nor did he hold him censurable for any sin whatsoever. And although from that time forth Saint Francis strove to spend much time with him in accordance with his vow of obedience, never any word of reproof or blame passed his lips toward one whom he knew to be a man of such great sanctity; but as often as he desired to see him, or indeed to hear him converse with God, as speedily as might be he went forth unto him; and it was most devout to see with how great love and reverence and humility Father Saint Francis used to speak with Brother Bernard his first-born son. To the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, and of that poor Christian, Francis. Amen.

Chapter Four

HOW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD PUT A QUESTION UNTO BROTHER ELIAS, THE KEEPER OF A CERTAIN CONVENT IN THE VALE OF SPOLETO, AND FORASMUCH AS BROTHER ELIAS MADE ANSWER HAUGHTILY, DEPARTED THENCE AND WENT FORTH UNTO ST. JAMES OF COMPOSTELLA, WHERE HE MET WITH BROTHER BERNARD AND TOLD HIS TALE UNTO HIM.

AT the beginning and first undertaking of the Order, when the Friars were but few, and but little land had been acquired, Saint Francis, from a spirit of devotion, did go to St. James of Galicia, and in his train were certain Brethren,

of whom one was Brother Bernard. And travelling thus their road, they met a poor sick beggar, having pity upon whom, Saint Francis said to Brother Bernard: "Son, I beseech you, stay here and serve this sick man." And Brother Bernard, humbly kneeling and bowing his head, yielded obedience to the Holy Father and remained in that spot; and Saint Francis with his companions went his way unto St. James. Coming thither and spending the night in prayer within the Church of St. James, it was revealed of God to Saint Francis that he was destined to acquire much land throughout the world, inasmuch as his Order was destined to spread and to grow even unto a vast multitude of Monks; and in accordance with this revelation Saint Francis forthwith began to acquire land in that same region. And travelling homeward by that selfsame way he came, Saint Francis met with Brother Bernard and the sick man with whom he left him, healed and made quite whole; hence Saint Francis granted Brother Bernard in the ensuing year that he also should visit St. James.

And thus Saint Francis returned into the Vale of Spoleto. And here he sojourned in a desolate place, he and Brother Maximus and Brother Elias and others. And every man among them strove mightily lest he should pester or annoy Saint Francis as he prayed; and this they did for the great reverence which they bare him, and forasmuch as they were well aware that God made known unto him great wonders in his prayers. It befell one day that Saint Francis being at prayer in the wood, a Beauteous Youth arrayed for a journey came to the door of that place wherein he stayed, and knocked so often and so loud and for so long a space, that much the brothers marvelled among themselves at such unwonted noise. Brother Maximus went out and oped the door and said to that youth, "Whence come you, O Son, since it seems you never did come hither yet, inasmuch as you knock thus contrary to all use?" The youth made answer:

"And how should I knock?" Then said Brother Maximus, "Knock thrice, the one knock following slowly after the other; then wait so long as until the Brother shall have said a Pater-noster and come unto you; and if after that space he come not, knock yet once again." The young man answered, "My haste is exceeding great, forasmuch as I have a long journey to make,



and am come hither to speak with Brother Francis; but he now is in the wood lost in a muse, and hence I will not vex him; but go call me hither Brother Elias, to whom I would put but one question only, since I hear that he is very wise." Brother Maxi-

mus went in and bade Brother Elias go out to the young man; and he waxed angry and would not go. At which thing Brother Maximus knew not what to do, neither what answer he should make to him, inasmuch as saying that Brother Elias could not come, he spake falsely; saying he was vexed in spirit and would not come, he feared lest he should set an evil example. And Brother Maximus lingering thus, the young man knocked yet again as before, and in a little time Brother Maximus returned to the gate, and said to the young man, "Why heed you not my counsels in your knocking?" The young man answered: "Brother Elias comes not unto me; go therefore and say to Brother Francis that I am come hither to speak with him; but forasmuch as I would not come against him in his praying, let him bid Brother Elias come out to me." And then Brother Maximus went in to Saint Francis, who was praying in the thick wood with his face lift up to heaven, and he delivered the young man's message and the answer of Brother Elias; and that young man was the Angel of the Lord in the likeness of a Man. Then Saint Francis, removing not from his place, neither casting down his eyes, said to Brother Maximus: "Go, say unto Brother Elias, by his vow of obedience I charge him that he shall go forthwith to that young man." Brother Elias, hearing Saint Francis' charge of obedience, went out to the gate greatly troubled, and with fury and noise did open it, and spake to the young man, saying, "What would you with me?" The young man made answer, saying, "Beware Brother, lest you be troubled in spirit even as you seem; for anger clouds the mind, letting it not see the Truth." Then said Brother Elias, "Tell me what you would with me." The young man made answer, "I ask you whether it be lawful for followers of the Holy Scriptures to eat that which is set before them, even as Christ spake to his disciples; and I ask you also whether it be lawful for any man to set before them aught that is contrary to Christian freedom?" Brother Elias made

answer loftily: "Well might I answer your question, but I will not do so; go your way." The young man said, "Better can I answer this question than can you." Then Brother Elias, vexed and angered, closed the gate and went thence. Going in, he began to ponder upon the said questions, and to doubt within himself concerning them, and he knew not how to solve them, notwithstanding that he was Vicar-General of the Order, and had commanded and writ in the Rule, contrary to the gospel and contrary to the Rule of Saint Francis, that no brother of the Order should eat meat; so that the said question was expressly directed against him. Thus, knowing not how to dissipate his doubts, and considering the modesty of the Youth, and how that he had said He could better answer the question than he, he turned back to the gate and opened it to ask of the Youth the aforesaid question; but he had already journeyed thence, forasmuch as the proud spirit of Brother Elias was not worthy to hold converse with the Angel.

This done, Saint Francis, to whom all things were revealed of God, returned from the wood, and with a loud voice reviled Brother Elias, saying, "Ill have you done, O proud Brother Elias, for you have driven hence from our midst holy Angels who came hither to counsel and instruct. I tell you that I fear exceeding much lest your pride lead you not forth at last from this order." And even so it fell out, as Saint Francis had said, inasmuch as he died outside the Order.

In that same day and in the selfsame hour when that Angel departed thence, He appeared in the selfsame form unto Brother Bernard, who was travelling back from St. James, and stood on the shores of a vast stream, and greeted him in his own tongue, saying, "God grant you His peace, O good Brother." And good Brother Bernard, marvelling much, and considering the fair face of the Youth and the speech of his own land with that peaceful greeting and joyous countenance, he asked him: "Whence come

you, good Youth?" The Angel answering said, "I come from that same place where dwells Saint Francis, and I travelled thither to have speech of him; but I could not, he being in the thick woods lost in contemplation of things divine, and I was loath to vex him. And in that same place dwell also Brother Maximus and Brother Guy and Brother Elias; and Brother Maximus bade me knock at the gate like unto a Friar; but Brother Elias, although at first he would not answer me concerning the question which I put to him, yet after did repent him sore and would fain have heard me and seen me and he could not." After these words the Angel spake to Brother Bernard, saying, "Why cross you not over yonder stream?" Brother Bernard made answer: "Forasmuch as I fear the dangers of the deep waters which I see." The Angel said, "We will pass over together, nothing doubting." And He took his hand, and in the twinkling of an eye He put him on the farther side of the stream. Then Brother Bernard knew that this was the Angel of the Lord, and with great awe and gladness he cried aloud, "O blessed Angel of the Lord, declare unto me your name." The Angel answered and said, "Why ask you me my name, which is Wonderful?" And saying this the Angel vanished, leaving Brother Bernard much comforted, insomuch so that he travelled all his road with great rejoicing; and he was mindful of the day and the hour in which the Angel had appeared unto him. And coming unto that place where Saint Francis abode with his chosen companions, he told them all in due order; and he knew for a certainty that that same Angel in the selfsame day and hour had appeared to him and them.

Chapter Five

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HOW THAT SAINT, BROTHER BERNARD OF ASSISI, WAS DESPATCHED BY SAINT FRANCIS TO BOLOGNA, AND HOW THERE HE TOOK UP HIS ABODE.

INASMUCH as Saint Francis and his companions were called of God and chosen to bear in their hearts and in their lives, and to preach with their tongues, the Cross of Christ, they both seemed and were men who crucified the flesh, alike in their habit and in their austere life, alike in their every act and deed; and nevertheless they desired the rather to endure shame and opprobrium for the love of Christ than to receive worldly honors, or reverence, or the praise of men: thus injuries rejoiced them and honors afflicted them; and thus they passed through the world as Pilgrims and Strangers, bearing with them nought save Christ Crucified; and yet they were the true Vine, which is Christ, bringing forth great and good spiritual fruit, which they garnered in for God. It happened in the first days of the Order that Saint Francis sent Brother Bernard forth to Bologna, to the end that there he might bear fruit unto God, according to the grace given him of Our Lord; and Brother Bernard, making the sign of the most Holy Cross, and mindful of his sacred vow of obedience, departed thence and came unto Bologna; and the children, seeing him in worn and tattered raiment, mocked at him and reviled him as they might have any clown; and Brother Bernard patiently and cheerfully bore all things for the love of Jesus Christ; nay, rather that the more he might be chastened, studiously did seat himself in the market-place, where sitting, there soon flocked round about him many boys and men, who pulled him by the cowl, some before and some behind, some cast dust upon him and some stones, some thrust and shoved him here and some there; and Brother Ber-

nard bore all things with patience and meekness, and with a smiling face, murmuring not, neither complaining; and, moreover, often he returned to that same place solely to suffer similar things for the good of his Soul. And albeit Patience have her perfect work and be a token of Virtue, a learned doctor of laws, seeing and considering so much constancy and valor in Brother Bernard, suffering for so many days unmoved by any blows or pinches, said to himself, "Verily, it cannot be but that is a holy man"; and drawing near to him, he questioned him thus: "Who art thou, and wherefore hast thou come hither?" And Brother Bernard for all answer put his hand into his bosom and drew forth the Rule of Saint Francis, and gave it to him that he might read; and having read, considering his extreme state of Perfection, with the utmost wonder and admiration he turned to his companions and said, "Verily, this is the most high state of religion of which I have heard; and this man and his companions are the most holy men in all the earth, and he who harms the least among them is guilty of a very grievous sin; for every man among them should be held in high honor, inasmuch as he is the true friend of God." And he spake to Brother Bernard, saying, "If you will abide among us, where you may serve God acceptably, I for the salvation of my soul will joyfully give you an abiding-place." Brother Bernard made answer: "Sir, methinks your words are inspired of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and I cheerfully accept this your offer, to the honor and glory of Christ." Then the said Judge with great joy and loving kindness led Brother Bernard to his house, and there bestowed upon him the promised lodging, and set it in order, and provided for all his costs; and shortly after he himself became a Father, and the especial ally and champion of Brother Bernard and of his companions. And Brother Bernard, for this his holy conversion, began to be much honored of all men, insomuch that they who might touch the hem of his garments, or could but look upon

him, held themselves blest; but he, as a true disciple of Christ, and of the meek and lowly Francis, fearing lest worldly honors should mar the peace and safety of his soul, departed thence one day and returned to Saint Francis and spake these words: "Father, an abiding-place is found in the city of Bologna : prithee send thither Brothers who may maintain it, and let them sojourn there, forasmuch as I no longer profit you ought in that spot; indeed, for the exceeding honor which is paid me I fear lest I lose more than I gain." Then Saint Francis, hearing all things in due order, how Our Lord had wrought a great work through Brother Bernard, praised and thanked God, Who thus deigned to increase the number of poor followers of the Cross: and then he sent forth his Companions into Bologna and into Lombardy, who acquired much land in many places.

Chapter Six

HOW SAINT FRANCIS BLESSED BROTHER BERNARD, AND MADE HIM HIS VICAR WHEN HE CAME TO PASS AWAY FROM THIS LIFE.

SO GREAT was the sanctity of Brother Bernard, that Saint Francis reverenced him much, and many times did praise him. Saint Francis once being devoutly rapt in prayer, it was revealed to him of God that Brother Bernard was by Divine Leave to sustain many and valiant battles with the demons; hence Saint Francis, having exceeding great compassion upon the said Brother Bernard, whom he loved as he were his own son, he prayed many days with tears, entreating God for him, and recommending him to Christ Jesus, that he might give him victory over the demon. And Saint Francis, praying thus devoutly, God one day made answer unto him: "Francis, fear not; forasmuch as all the temptations by which Brother Bernard is to be assailed are allowed of God as a test of his valor and a

Crown of Glory, and finally he shall triumph over all his enemies, forasmuch as he is one of the Commissaries of the kingdom of Heaven." At the which answer Saint Francis rejoiced greatly, and praised the Lord; and from that time forth his love and reverence waxed ever greater. And well he proved them, not only in his life, but also in his death. Forasmuch as Saint Francis, being about to die, even as that holy Patriarch Jacob, his mourning sons standing about him devoutly, weeping at the departure of so amiable a father, he asked them, "Where is my Firstborn? Come hither to me, my Son, that my Soul may bless thee before I die." Then Brother Bernard said privily to Brother Elias, who was the Vicar of the Order, "Father, go thou to the right hand of the Saint, that he may bless thee." And Brother Elias, placing himself upon his right hand, Saint Francis, who had lost his sight by reason of his many tears, laid his right hand upon the head of Brother Elias and said, "This is not the head of my firstborn son, Brother Bernard." Then Brother Bernard went and stood by his left hand; and Saint Francis stretching forth his arms in the form of a Cross, laid his right hand upon the head of Brother Bernard and his left hand upon the head of that same Brother Elias, and said to Brother Bernard: "May God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ bless thee with every spiritual blessing, and may Christ grant thee all celestial blessings, even as thou art the Firstborn, chosen into this Holy Order to give a godly example, to follow Christ in Christian poverty; inasmuch as thou hast given not only all that which was thine, dividing it wholly and freely among the poor for the love of Christ, but also hast given thyself a free-will offering unto God in this Order, a sacrifice pleasing in His sight. Receive, therefore, the blessing of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of me, His poor servant, blessings everlasting, whether walking, standing, waking, sleeping, living, or dying; and all who shall bless thee shall themselves be filled with blessing. They who curse thee shall not go

unpunished. Thou art chief among all thy Brethren, and all the Brothers shall bow to thy will. Thou hast my leave to receive into the Order whomsoever thou wilt; and no Brother shall have supremacy over thee, and thou art free to come and go whithersoever thou wilt." And after the death of Saint Francis the Brethren loved and revered Brother Bernard as a venerable

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Father; and he, coming to die, many Brothers gathered about him from all quarters of the globe, among them being that divine hierarch Brother Guy, who, seeing Brother Bernard, cried aloud, with great gladness, "*Lift up your heart, Brother Bernard; lift*

up your heart." And Brother Bernard bade one of the Brethren privily that he should prepare a place meet for contemplation for Brother Guy; and so it was done. Brother Bernard, being at the last hour of his death, bade his Brethren lift him up, and spake to such of them as were there present, saying: "My beloved Brethren, I have not many words to speak to you. But you must be mindful that that degree of Religion which I have had you have at this present, and unto that which I now enjoy, you shall yet attain; and I tell you from my soul of souls that I would not for a thousand Worlds like unto this have served other Lord than Our Lord Jesus Christ. And for every offence that I have committed I confess myself guilty, and accuse myself before my Saviour Jesus and before you. I beseech you, my dearest Brethren, love one another." And after these words, and other wholesome teachings, he laid himself down upon his bed, his face shone with joy and splendor so exceeding that all the Brothers marvelled greatly, and in that rapture his most saintly soul, crowned with glory, passed from this present life into the blessed life of the angels.

Chapter Seven

HOW SAINT FRANCIS FASTED FORTY DAYS AND NIGHTS IN AN ISLAND OF THE LAKE OF PERUGIA, EATING NO MORE BUT HALF A LOAF.

THAT true servant of Christ, Saint Francis, being in certain things almost another Christ, sent into the world to save the nations, Our Lord and Father God desired to make him in many acts conformable and like unto His Son Jesus Christ; even as we have seen in the venerable College of the twelve Companions, and in the admirable Mystery of the Sacred Stigmata, and in the Fast lasting throughout the whole term of Lent, which took place after this manner: Saint Francis being

once, upon the last day of the Carnival, beside the Lake of Perugia in the house of one of his devout followers, with whom he had tarried for a night, he was inspired of God that he should proceed to keep his fast in an Island of that lake; wherefore Saint Francis prayed this his follower that for the love of Christ he would bear him over in his boat unto an Island of the lake where no man abode; this he should do upon the night of Ash Wednesday, in such manner that they might be seen of none; and he for love of the great devotion which he felt for Saint Francis faithfully did his behest, and bare him over to the Island: and Saint Francis took nothing with him save two small loaves. And having come to the Island, and his friend departing thence to return to his house, Saint Francis charged him by the love which he bare him that he should reveal to no man where he did lie, and that he should not journey back to fetch him sooner than Maundy-Thursday; and thus they parted. And Saint Francis abode there alone; and there being no habitation wherein he might find shelter, he entered into a thick wood wherein many thorns and brambles and little bushes had formed a den or burrow, and herein he fell to praying and to musing upon celestial things. And herein he stayed during the whole space of Lent, eating not, neither drinking aught, save the half of one of those small loaves, according as his faithful follower found him when he crossed over to him on Maundy-Thursday; the which found of two small loaves one entire, and of the other half; it is believed that Saint Francis did partake out of reverence for the fasting of the blessed Christ, Who fasted forty days and forty nights, partaking of no bodily food; and thus with that half loaf he drove far from him the venom of Vain-glory, and following after Christ fasted forty days and forty nights. And then in that place where Francis did such marvellous feats of abstinence God the Lord wrought many miracles through his merits: for the which thing men began to build

houses there and to dwell there; and in a brief space a Castle good and great stood therein, and this was the home of the Brethren, and it was called by the name of the Island; and even unto this present time the men and the women of that Castle display great reverence and devotion upon that spot where Saint Francis fasted as has been here set forth.

Chapter Eight

HOW SAINT FRANCIS AND BROTHER LEO, AS THEY JOURNEYED,
DISCOURSED OF PERFECT BLISS.

SAINt FRANCIS once journeying from Perugia to St. Mary of the Angels with Brother Leo in winter time, and the very great cold pinching him sore, he called aloud to Brother Leo, who walked before, and said thus: "Brother Leo, although the Gray Friars in every place set a good example of sanctity and of godly lessons, nevertheless I desire you to write down and diligently to note that they know not perfect bliss." And Saint Francis journeying yet farther, a second time he called aloud, "O Brother Leo, albeit the Gray Friar be eyes to the blind, deliver men from evil, drive out demons, be ears to the deaf, and feet to the lame, a tongue to the dumb, and what is yet more do restore the dead to life within the space of four days, yet write that he knows not perfect bliss." And journeying yet a little farther, he cried with a loud voice, "O Brother Leo, if the Gray Friar know all tongues, all knowledge, and all the Scriptures in such fashion that he may prophesy and reveal not alone the things of the future, but even also the secrets of all consciences and of all souls, still I bid thee write, herein lies not perfect bliss." Going yet a little farther, Saint Francis called aloud yet once again: "O Brother Leo, Lamb of God, even though the Gray Friar speak with the tongues of men and of

angels, and know the course of the stars and the virtues of all herbs, and were all the treasures of the earth laid bare to him, and did he know the virtues of birds and fishes, and of all animals and of men and of trees and of stones and of roots and of waters, still write that herein lies not perfect bliss." And journeying yet a little space Saint Francis cried aloud: "O Brother Leo, even could the Gray Friar preach so well as that he should turn all infidels to the faith of Christ, yet write, herein lies not perfect bliss." And this discourse enduring for full two miles, Brother Leo with amazement asked him, saying, "Father, I pray thee, for God's sake, that thou wilt tell me where may perfect bliss be found?" And Saint Francis made answer thus: "When we shall have come unto St. Mary of the Angels, dripping with rain and frozen with cold and bespattered with mud and tormented sore for hunger, and shall knock at the door of that place, and the porter shall look forth in wrath, and shall say, 'Who are ye?' and we shall say, 'We be two of your Brethren'; and he shall say, 'You speak not truly; forsooth you are two ribald knaves who go about deceiving folk and stealing alms from the poor, get you gone!' and he shall not open unto us, and shall leave us standing without in the snow and the wet with cold and hunger even till the fall of night; then if we shall patiently endure such great injustice and cruelty and villainous rebuffs without peevishness or turbulence, murmuring not against him, and shall think humbly and charitably that verily that doorkeeper reads us aright, that our Lord hath bade him revile us and speak against us, then, O Brother Leo, mayst thou write, herein lies perfect bliss. And if we shall persevere our knocking, and he shall come forth in his wrath and drive us thence as rascals, with stripes and revilings, saying, 'Get you hence, vilest thieves, get you to the hospital, for here you shall not abide, neither shall you eat,— if we shall endure the same meekly and with rejoicing and love, O Brother Leo, then mayst

thou write that herein lies perfect bliss. And if we, urged by hunger and cold and by the darkness, shall still persist our knocking and shall cry aloud and entreat him for the love of God with much weeping and wailing that he will open and let us in, and he, scandalized yet more, shall say, 'These are importunate knaves, I will chastise them as is meet; and shall come forth with a knotty staff, and shall seize us by the hair of the head and cast us to the ground, and roll us in the snow, and beat us knot by knot with that same staff, — if all these things patiently and cheerfully we do endure, thinking upon the sufferings of the blessed Christ, which greatly are we bounden to suffer for His sake, O Brother Leo, then mayst thou write that herein and in this lies perfect bliss. And yet hearken unto the end, Brother Leo. Beyond all the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, which Christ has granted unto His faithful friends, is victory over self, and power for love of Christ to suffer pain and insult, poverty and disgrace; forasmuch as in all the other gifts of God we can take no pride, they being not our own but of God. Hence the Apostle saith, 'What have ye which is not of God? And if it be of Him, wherefore do ye glory in it, as if ye had it of your own selves?' But in the cross of sorrow and grief we may glory, inasmuch as the Apostle saith, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.' "

Chapter Nine

HOW SAINT FRANCIS TAUGHT BROTHER LEO TO MAKE ANSWER UNTO HIM: AND HE COULD NEVER SPEAK SAVE THE CONTRARY OF THAT WHICH SAINT FRANCIS WILLED.

SAINt FRANCIS being once, in the first days of the Order, with Brother Leo in a place where they had no books to say the divine offices, when the hour for Matins was at

hand, Saint Francis said to Brother Leo: "My beloved, we have no breviary from which to say Matins, but in order that we may spend the time duly in praising God, I will recite and do you respond as I shall teach you; and beware lest you change the words diversely from that which I shall teach you. I will say thus: 'O Brother Francis, so much evil hast thou done, and so many sins hast thou committed in this world, that thou art worthy of Hell-fire.' And you, Brother Leo, must respond: 'Verily, verily thou art deserving of the hottest fires of Hell.' " And Brother Leo, with the simplicity of the dove, replied, "I am ready, Father; begin, in the name of God." Then Saint Francis began to say, "O Brother Francis, so much evil hast thou done, and so many sins hast thou committed in this world, that thou art worthy of Hell-fire." And Brother Leo replied, "The Lord shall work for thee such miracles that thou shalt go straight to Paradise." Then said Saint Francis, "Say not so, Brother Leo; but when I say, 'Brother Francis, thou hast sinned grievously against God, and art worthy to be cursed of God,' you must make answer thus: 'Verily, verily thou art worthy of a place among the Accursed.' " And Brother Leo replied, "I am ready, Father." Then Saint Francis, with many tears and groans and much beating of his breast, cried aloud, "O Lord my God, Lord of heaven and of earth, I have committed such sins against Thee, and such iniquities, that I am worthy to be cursed of Thee." And Brother Leo made answer, "O Brother Francis, God shall do such things for thee that thou shalt be singularly blessed among the blessed." And Saint Francis marvelling that Brother Leo answered ever the contrary of that which he had charged him, essayed once more, saying, "Why answer you not as I bid you? I charge you by your holy vow of obedience that you make answer as I shall direct you. I will say thus: 'O wretched Brother Francis, dost thou think that God will have mercy upon thee, who hast committed such great sins against the Father of

all Mercies and the God of Consolation that thou art no more worthy to find favor in His sight?' And you, Brother Leo, sheep of my flock, must make answer, 'In no manner art thou worthy to find favor in His sight.' " But so soon as Saint Francis said, "O wretched Brother Francis," etc., Brother Leo replied: "Our Heavenly Father, whose mercy is infinitely greater than are thy



sins, will have mercy upon thee and will pour His grace upon thee." At this answer Saint Francis was gently enraged and meekly disturbed, saying to Brother Leo, "And wherefore do you make so bold to act contrary to your vow of obedience,

and have so many times made answer contrary to that which I charged you to say?" Brother Leo replied very humbly and reverently, "God the Lord knoweth the why and the wherefore, my Father, for every time I have schooled my heart to answer as you did bid me; but the Lord made me speak as best it pleased Him, and not according as was pleasing in my sight." At which thing Saint Francis marvelled, and said to Brother Leo, "I pray you most lovingly that this time you answer me as I do bid you." Brother Leo replied, "Say on, in God's name, for assuredly I will now make answer as you would have me." And Saint Francis, weeping, said, "O wicked Brother Francis, dost thou think that God will show mercy unto thee?" Brother Leo answered him, saying, "Ay, and great grace shalt thou have of God. He shall exalt thee, and glorify thee in all ages, forasmuch as he who humbleth himself shall be exalted; and I can speak no otherwise than I do, forasmuch as God Himself speaks through my mouth." And thus in this humble strife, with many tears and with much spiritual consolation, they watched until day.

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Chapter Ten

HOW BROTHER MAXIMUS MOCKINGLY SAID UNTO SAINT FRANCIS THAT THE WORLD WAS AT HIS FEET. AND HE MADE ANSWER THAT THIS WAS ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND WAS A DISGRACE TO THE WORLD.

Saint Francis sojourning upon a time in the Convent of Portiuncula with Brother Maximus of Marignano, a man of much sanctity, discretion, and grace in discoursing of God, for the which thing greatly did Saint Francis love him, one day Saint Francis returning from the thick wood and from

prayer, and being upon the outskirts of that woody wild, that same Brother Maximus, desiring to know whether his humility were unfeigned, went forth to meet him by the way, and mockingly cried out to him, "Wherefore after thee? Wherefore after thee? Wherefore after thee?" Saint Francis asked, "What say you?" Then said Brother Maximus, "I say, wherefore followeth the whole world after thee, and why doth every man desire to see and to hear and to obey thee? Thou art not fair to see, thou hast no great learning, neither art thou noble; wherefore, then, doth the whole world follow after thee?" Hearing this, Saint Francis, greatly rejoiced in spirit, lifting his face to Heaven, stood for a space with his mind fixed on God, and then coming back to earth he knelt and gave praise and glory to God, and then with very fervent spirit he turned to Brother Maximus and said, "Would you know wherefore men follow after me? Would you know wherefore men follow after me? Would you know wherefore men follow after me? This grace I have from the eyes of the Most High God, which in all places behold the godly and the ungodly: forasmuch as those most holy eyes never yet beheld of sinners one more vile, nor more insufficient, nor a greater sinner than am I; nor yet to do that marvellous work which He willeth to accomplish has He found a viler creature upon earth. And therefore hath He chosen me, to confound the Nobility and the Grandeur and the Strength and the Beauty and the Wisdom of the world, to the end that it may be made known that all Virtue and all Goodness are from Him and not from His creatures, and that none may glory in his own sight; but that all who glory may glory in the Lord, unto whom be all glory and honor for ever and ever Amen." Then Brother Maximus at so humble an answer, uttered with such fervor, was affrighted, and knew of a surety that the humility of Saint Francis was unfeigned.

Chapter Eleven

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HOW SAINT FRANCIS CAUSED BROTHER MAXIMUS TO TURN HIMSELF ABOUT, AND THEN DEPARTED UNTO SIENNA.

SAIN'T FRANCIS one day journeying with Brother Maximus, that same Brother Maximus walking a few paces before, and coming unto a spot where three roads met, the which led to Florence, to Sienna, and to Arezzo, Brother Maximus spake thus: "Father, which road shall we pursue?" Saint Francis made answer, "By that which God chooseth." Then said Brother Maximus, "And how may we know the will of God?" Saint Francis replied, "By that selfsame sign which I shall show you; wherefore I charge you by the fruits of holy obedience that at this meeting-place of the roads, in the very spot whereon your feet now rest, you do turn yourself about, even as do children, and give not over turning until I do bid thee cease." Forthwith Brother Maximus began to turn and to twirl himself round about; and so long did he turn, that at last from sheer dizziness, such as such twirling is wont to generate, he fell often to the ground: but Saint Francis not bidding him to cease, and he desiring faithfully to obey, rose ever and again to his feet. Finally, as he turned valiantly, Saint Francis cried out, "Stand still, and move not." And he stood still, and Saint Francis questioned him, saying, "Towards what land do you look?" Brother Maximus answered, "Towards Sienna." Saint Francis said, "That way God wills us to go." Travelling that way, Brother Maximus marvelled that Saint Francis had made him do such things, even as do children at play, in the sight of those laymen who passed along that road. Nevertheless, so great was his reverence that he ventured not to speak to the Holy Father. Coming near to Sienna, the people of that city heard of the

coming of the Saint, and went forth to meet him; and from devotion they bore him and his companion even unto the Episcopal Palace in their arms, so that they touched not earth with their feet. In that same hour certain men of Sienna strove together, and two of them already lay dead. Saint Francis being in their midst, preached unto them so devoutly and so holily that he restored them all, every man among them, to peace and great unity and mutual concord; for the which thing the Bishop of Sienna, hearing of this holy work which Saint Francis had wrought, invited him to his own house, and received him with extremest honor that day and even for the night. And the next morning Saint Francis, being truly humble, seeking never any glory for his works, save only the glory of God, rose betimes with his companion and departed unknown to the Bishop. At which the said Brother Maximus murmured within himself as he journeyed, saying as he went, "What things are these which this good man does? He makes me turn and twirl like any silly child; and to the Bishop, who has done him such honor, he speaks no word, neither thanks him, and it seemeth to Brother Maximus as if Saint Francis thus had borne himself indiscreetly." But then by divine inspiration returning unto himself, and chiding himself in the silence of his own heart, Brother Maximus exclaimed, "You are of too proud a spirit, you who dare to condemn divine works, and you are worthy of Hell-fire for your foolish pride; inasmuch as Saint Francis in the day of yesterday performed such holy deeds, that had they been done by an Angel of God they could not have been more marvellous. Hence, if he command you to dash yourself against a rock, you should obey him and do so; for those things which he has done upon this pilgrimage proceed from Divine Action, as is set forth by the good result which followed after them; forasmuch as if he had pacified those who strove together, not only many bodies, as already there began to be seen, would have perished by the

knife, but even also many souls would the Devil have dragged down into Hell; and yet you, vain and silly that you are, murmur at that which manifestly proceedeth from the will of God." And all these things which Brother Maximus spake within his own heart were straightway revealed of God to Saint Francis. Whence Saint Francis drawing near to him spake these words: "Abide by those things on which you now muse, forasmuch as they are good and useful, and inspired of God; but the first complaints which you uttered were blind and vain and arrogant, and instilled into your mind of the Devil." Then Brother Maximus saw clearly that Saint Francis knew the secrets of his heart, and knew for a surety that the Spirit of Divine Wisdom guided the Holy Father in his every action.

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Chapter Twelve

HOW SAINT FRANCIS BESTOWED ON BROTHER MAXIMUS THE OFFICES OF GATE-KEEPER, ALMONER, AND COOK: THEN AT THE PRAYER OF THE OTHER BROTHERS DEPRIVED HIM OF THEM.

Saint Francis, wishing to mortify Brother Maximus, to the end that the many gifts and graces which God had given him might not make him Vainglorious, but that by virtue of Humility he might grow with them from virtue to virtue, upon a time when he dwelt in a solitary place with those his first companions, very Saints, of whom was the said Brother Maximus, spake one day to Brother Maximus before all his companions: "O Brother Maximus, all these your companions have the grace of contemplation and of prayer, but you have the grace to preach the word of God to the satisfaction of the people; and hence I desire, to the end that they may apply themselves to contemplation, that you do take upon yourself

the offices of Door-keeper, of Almoner, and Cook. And when the other Brothers do eat, you shall eat without the convent gate; to the end that those who come hither, before they knock you may satisfy them with certain goodly words from God; so that there be no need for any to issue forth but only you; and this do through the fruits of holy obedience." Thereupon Brother Maximus drew on his cowl, and bowed his head, and humbly received and continued to obey this charge for many days, filling the offices of Door-keeper, of Almoner, and of Cook. Whence his companions, like men illumined of God, began to feel great remorse within their hearts, considering that Brother Maximus was a man of exceeding great perfectness, like unto themselves or yet more, and upon him rested all the burden of the Convent and not on them. For the which thing they were all moved with one accord, and went in and prayed the Holy Father that it might please him to distribute those offices among them; forasmuch as their consciences could in no manner endure that Brother Maximus should undergo such toil. Hearing this, Saint Francis yielded to their counsels and consented to their wish, and calling Brother Maximus, said to him, "Brother Maximus, your companions desire to share in those offices which I have bestowed upon you; and therefore I desire that the said offices may be divided." Brother Maximus said with great patience and meekness, "Father, the burden which you lay upon me, be it all or but a part, I hold it as the work of God alone." Then Saint Francis, seeing the loving-kindness of those brothers and the humility of Brother Maximus, preached them a marvellous sermon upon the most saintly quality of Humility; teaching them that the greater are the gifts and the graces bestowed upon us by God, so much the more humble should we be, forasmuch as without humility no virtue is acceptable in God's sight. And the sermon ended, he distributed the offices with the utmost affection.

Chapter Thirteen

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HOW SAINT FRANCIS AND BROTHER MAXIMUS LAID THE BREAD WHICH THEY HAD BEGGED UPON A STONE BESIDE A WELL, AND SAINT FRANCIS LOUDLY PRAISED POVERTY. THEN HE PRAYED UNTO GOD AND SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL THAT THEY MIGHT EN-AMOUR HIM OF DIVINE POVERTY; AND HOW SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL APPEARED UNTO HIM.

THAT wondrous servant and follower of Christ, which is Saint Francis, desiring to conform himself perfectly unto Christ in all things, who, as the Gospel tells us, sent out his Disciples two by two into all those cities and towns whither He was to go; therefore following the example of Christ he assembled together twelve Companions and sent them forth into the world to preach two by two. And to set them an example of true obedience, he first began to practise that which he did after preach. Hence having assigned to his Companions the other parts of the world, he, taking Brother Maximus as his companion, set forth towards the Province of France. And coming one day to a certain town and being very hungry, they begged their bread as they went, according to the rule of their Order, for the love of God; and Saint Francis went through one quarter of the town and Brother Maximus through another. But forasmuch as Saint Francis was a man mean and low of stature, and hence was reputed a vile beggar by such as knew him not, he only begged a few scanty crusts and mouthfuls of dry bread; but to Brother Maximus, inasmuch as he was great and well-favored, were given good pieces and large, and an abundance of bread, yea, whole loaves. Having begged, they met together without the town to eat, at a place where there was a clear well,

and beside it was a fair large stone, upon which each spread forth the alms which he had begged; and Saint Francis seeing that the pieces of bread begged by Brother Maximus were more and better and bigger than his own, rejoiced greatly, saying, "O Brother Maximus, we are not worthy of so great a treasure"; and repeating these words many times, Brother Maximus replied, "Father, how can you talk of treasures, where there is such great poverty and such lack of all things needful? Here is neither napkin nor knife, neither board nor trencher, neither house nor table, neither man-servant nor maid-servant." Saint Francis said: "And this is that same which I repute a great treasure, where nought is made ready by human industry; but all that is here is prepared by Divine Providence, as is plainly set forth in the bread which we have begged, in the table of fair stone, and in the well of clear water, and therefore I would that we should pray to God that He teach us to love with all our heart the treasure of Holy Poverty which is so noble a thing, and whose servant is God the Lord." And having said these words, and having prayed, and having taken the bodily refec-tion of those crusts of bread and of that water, they arose to journey into France; and coming to a church, Saint Francis said to his companion, "Let us enter into this church to pray." And straightway Saint Francis retired behind the altar and fell to praying; and in that prayer he received exceeding fervor from the Divine Visitation, which so inflamed his soul with the love of Holy Poverty, that what with the color of his face and with the yawning of his mouth he seemed to dart forth flames of love. And coming thus kindled unto his comrade, he said, "Ah, ah, ah, Brother Maximus, give me thyself"; and these words he spake three times; and the third time Saint Francis lifted Brother Maximus in the air with his breath, and cast him before him for the space of a tall staff; at which that same Brother Maximus was much amazed. He afterwards told his companions that in

that raising and impulsion of the breath, performed of Saint Francis, he felt such spiritual sweetness and consolation of the Holy Ghost as he never before had known in his life. And this done, Saint Francis said, "Comrade mine, let us go to Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and let us pray them that they will be pleased to teach us and aid us to possess the unbounded treasure

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of most Holy Poverty; forasmuch as it is a treasure so worthy and so divine that we are not worthy to possess it in our most vile vessels; seeing that it is that celestial virtue by which all things transitory and terrestrial are trodden under foot, and by

the which every care is smoothed from the soul, to the end that it may freely be conjoined with the Everlasting God; and this is that same virtue which makes the soul still bound to earth converse with angels in Heaven; and this it is which went with Christ even to the Cross, was buried with Christ, rose from the dead with Christ, with Christ ascended into Heaven; which even in this life grants to souls which truly love it the power to ascend into Heaven, forasmuch as it preserves the armor of true humility and loving-kindness. And therefore let us pray the most Holy Apostles of Christ, who were perfect lovers of this Gospel Pearl, that they will be pleased to bestow on us this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that of His most holy mercy He will make us worthy to be true lovers, followers, and humble disciples of the most precious, most dearly beloved, and evangelical Poverty." And in such discourse they reached Rome, and entered into the church of St. Peter; and Saint Francis began to pray in one corner of the church and Brother Maximus in the other. And praying long with many tears and great devotion, the most Holy Apostles Peter and Paul appeared unto Saint Francis with great splendor, saying, "Forasmuch as you demand and desire to follow that which Christ and the Holy Apostles followed, the Lord Jesus Christ sends us to you to say that your prayer has been heard, and that God yields to you and to your followers the treasure of most Holy Poverty in fullest measure. And also He bids us say unto you that whosoever like you shall truly follow this desire, he shall be blessed forevermore; and you and all your companions shall be blessed of God." And having uttered these words they vanished away, leaving Saint Francis greatly consoled. The same rose from his prayers and returned to his companion and asked him if God had revealed nothing to him. And he answered, "No." Then Saint Francis told him how the Holy Apostles had appeared unto him, and that which they had revealed to him. Upon which, each being

filled with joy, they determined to return into the Vale of Spoleto, journeying not into France.

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Chapter Fourteen

HOW SAINT FRANCIS, DISCOURSING OF GOD WITH HIS BRETHREN,
HE APPEARED IN THEIR MIDST.

Saint Francis, in the early days of the foundation of his Order, being gathered together with his companions, discoursing of Christ, in the ardor of his spirit, did charge one among them that he open his mouth in the name of God, and speak concerning God that which the Holy Ghost should inspire him to say. The Brother obeying the command, and speaking marvellous well concerning God, Saint Francis imposed silence upon him, and required the same of another friar. He obeying, and speaking subtilely of God, Saint Francis likewise imposed silence upon him; and he commanded a third that he should speak of God, who likewise began to talk so wisely of the secret things of God that Saint Francis knew certainly that he, as also the other two, spake from the Holy Ghost, and this also was proven by an example, and by an express sign; for they being in this discourse, Christ the Blessed appeared in their midst visibly and in the bodily form of a most lovely Youth; and blessing them, he filled them all with such grace and sweetness that they were ravished out of themselves, and fell like dead men, knowing nought of this world. And then returning to their senses, Saint Francis said to them: "My beloved Brothers, give thanks to God, Who has been pleased to reveal the treasures of the Divine Wisdom through the mouths of the simple; forasmuch as it is God Who opes the mouth of the dumb and makes the tongue of the simple to discourse most wisely."

Chapter Fifteen

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HOW SAINT CLARA ATE WITH SAINT FRANCIS AND WITH HIS BROTHER MONKS IN ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS.

Saint Francis, when he was at Assisi, oftentimes visited Saint Clara, giving her holy teachings; and she having the greatest desire to eat with him but once, and entreating him many times to this end, he would never grant her that Consolation. Hence his companions, seeing the desire of Saint Clara, said to Saint Francis: "Father, to us it seems that such severity is not in accordance with Divine Charity, that Sister Clara, a virgin so saintly and so beloved of God, should not find favor in your sight to gain so small a thing as to eat with you; and especially considering that she through your preachings forsook riches and all the pomps of this world; and verily, were she to ask you a much greater grace than this, you should grant it to your spiritual child." Then Saint Francis replied, "Does it seem to you that I should hear her prayer?" His companions answered, "Father, yes; it is a righteous thing that you should grant her request, and a consolation." Then Saint Francis said: "Since it seems meet to you, it seems so also unto me. But that she may be the more consoled, I desire that this meal should be eaten in the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, forasmuch as she has long been cloistered in St. Damian: therefore it will rejoice her much to see the Church of St. Mary, where her locks were shorn off and she was made the bride of Jesus Christ; and there we will eat together in the name of God." When the day came appointed for this, Saint Clara left her Convent with one companion, accompanied by the companions of Saint Francis, and came to St. Mary of the Angels; and having devoutly saluted the Virgin Mary before the altar, where her locks had been

shorn and the veil had been placed upon her head, they led her about to see the place until at last it was time to dine. And Saint Francis ordered the cloth to be laid in their midst upon the bare ground, as he was wont to do. And when the hour for dinner came, Saint Francis and Saint Clara sat down together, and one of the comrades of Saint Francis with Saint Clara's companion, and then all their other companions took their places humbly. And for the first dish Saint Francis began to talk of God so sweetly, so nobly, so wondrous well, that the abundance of the Divine grace descending upon them, they were all transported as it were to Heaven. And being thus transported, with eyes and hands raised to Heaven, the men of Assisi and of Bettona, and of the country round about, saw how St. Mary of the Angels, and all that place, and the wood which stood beside it, burned fiercely; and it seemed as it were a great fire, which filled the Church, and the place, and the wood also; wherefore the people of Assisi in great haste ran thither to put out the fire, truly thinking that everything was burning. But on reaching the spot, and finding no flames, they entered in, and found Saint Francis with Saint Clara, and with all their companions, absorbed in the contemplation of God, and sitting around that humble board. Whence they perceived that those were divine and not material flames, which God had caused to appear miraculously, to show forth and signify the Fire of the Divine Love with which the souls of those holy monks and nuns were consumed; wherefore they departed with great consolation in their hearts, and with holy edification. Then after a great space Saint Francis returning to himself, and likewise Saint Clara, together with the others, and feeling themselves much comforted by the spiritual food, they cared little for bodily sustenance. And thus, this blessed meal being ended, Saint Clara, well escorted, returned to St. Damian; whence her Sisters, seeing her coming, rejoiced greatly, inasmuch as they feared

lest Saint Francis had sent her to rule over some other convent, even as he had already sent Sister Agnes, her ghostly sister, as abbess to rule over the monastery of Monticelli at Florence; and Saint Francis had once said to Saint Clara, "Be ready, if I need you, that I may send you somewhither," and she, as beseemed a daughter of Holy Obedience, had made answer, "Father, I am ever ready to go whithersoever you may send me." And hence the Sisters rejoiced greatly when they saw her again among them: and Saint Clara thenceforth remained much consoled.

Chapter Sixteen

HOW SAINT FRANCIS RECEIVED THE ADVICE OF SAINT CLARA AND OF HOLY BROTHER SYLVESTER, THAT HE SHOULD GO FORTH AND PREACH, CONVERTING THE PEOPLE; AND HE CREATED THE THIRD ORDER, AND PREACHED TO THE BIRDS AND SILENCED THE YOUNG SWALLOWS.

THAT humble servant of Jesus Christ, Saint Francis, shortly after his conversion, having already gathered together many companions and received them into the Order, fell into deep thought and into grave doubt as to what he should do, — whether he should devote himself wholly to prayer, or whether indeed he should sometimes preach; and on this subject he greatly desired to know the will of God. And forasmuch as the saintly humility which was in him would not let him trust to himself or to his own prayers alone, he strove to seek out the divine will through the prayers of others; hence he called Brother Maximus, and spake to him thus: "Go to Sister Clara and tell her from me that she, with certain of her most spiritual companions, shall pray devoutly to God that it may please Him to

reveal to me whether it is better that I should devote myself to preaching, or merely to prayer. And then go to Brother Sylvester and say the same words." This was that same Master Sylvester who had seen a golden cross come forth from the mouth of Saint Francis, which was as high as the heavens and as broad as the confines of the globe. And such were the devotion and the sanctity of this same Brother Sylvester, that whatsoever he asked of God, even that same he obtained, and his prayer was granted, and many times he spake with God; and yet Saint Francis also had great piety. Brother Maximus went forth, and according to the command of Saint Francis he fulfilled his errand first to Saint Clara and then to Brother Sylvester; who, when he had received it, incontinently fell to praying, and praying he heard the Divine voice, and turning to Brother Maximus he said: "Thus saith the Lord, which you shall repeat to Brother Francis,— that God did not call him unto this state for himself alone, but that he might reap a harvest of souls, and many through him shall be saved." Having this answer, Brother Maximus returned to Saint Clara to know that which she had obtained of God. And she made answer that she and her Companions had had from God the selfsame answer which Brother Sylvester had had. With this Brother Maximus returned to Saint Francis; and Saint Francis received him with the utmost Affection, washing his feet and laying the cloth for him to dine. And after eating, Saint Francis called Brother Maximus into the thick wood; and there he knelt before him, and drawing down his cowl over his face, he crossed his arms and asked him, saying, "What does my Lord and Master Jesus Christ command me to do?" Brother Maximus made answer: "Both to Brother Sylvester and to Sister Clara, with her Sisters, Christ has replied and made manifest that it is His will that you shall go forth into the world to preach; forasmuch as He did not call you for yourself alone, but even also for the salvation of others." And then Saint Francis, when

that he had heard this answer and learned therefrom the will of Jesus Christ, rose up with the greatest fervor, saying, "Let us go forth in the name of God." And he took for his companions Brother Maximus and Brother Andrew, holy men both; and going forth filled with the things of the spirit, without considering their road or their way, they came to a castle, which is called Savurniano, and Saint Francis began to preach; and he first commanded the swallows, which were singing, to keep silence so long as until he should have preached; and the swallows obeyed him; and he preached in this place with such fervor that all the men and the women in that castle, from devotion, would have followed after him and forsaken the castle; but Saint Francis forbade them, saying, "Be not in haste, and depart not, and I will order all things which you are to do for the salvation of your soul." And then he created the Third Order, for the universal salvation of all men; and thus leaving many consoled and well disposed to penitence, he departed from thence and came to Cannajo and Bevagno. And passing on his way with the selfsame fervor, he raised his eyes and saw certain trees by the roadside in which were an infinite multitude of birds; at which Saint Francis marvelled greatly, and said to his companions, "Await me here in the road, and I will go and preach to my Sisters the birds." And he entered the field and began to preach to the birds which were on the ground; and suddenly those which were in the trees came down to him, and as many as there were they all stood quietly until Saint Francis had done preaching; and even then they did not depart until such time as he had given them his blessing; and according to the later recital of Brother Maximus to Brother James of Massa, Saint Francis moving among them touched them with his cape, but not one moved. The substance of Saint Francis' sermon was this: "My Sisters the birds, ye are greatly beholden unto God your Creator, and always and in every place it is your

duty to praise Him, forasmuch as He hath given you freedom to fly in every place; also hath He given you raiment twofold and threefold almost, because He preserved your seed in the ark of Noah, that your race might never be less. Again, ye are bounden to Him for the element of the air, which He has deputed unto you; moreover, you sow not, neither do you reap, and God feeds you, and gives you the streams and fountains for your thirst; he gives you mountains and valleys for your refuge; tall trees wherein to make your nests; and inasmuch as you neither spin nor weave, God clothes you, you and your children; hence ye should love your Creator greatly, Who gives you such great benefits, and therefore beware, my Sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and ever strive to praise God." Saint Francis saying these words to them, all those birds, as many as there were, began to ope their beaks and stretch forth their necks and spread their wings and reverently to bow their heads even to the earth, and by their acts and their songs to set forth that the Holy Father gave them the utmost delight; and Saint Francis rejoiced with them, pleased and marvelling much to see so vast a multitude of birds, and their most beautiful variety, their attention and familiarity; for the which things in them he devoutly praised the Creator. Finally, his preaching ended, Saint Francis made them the sign of the cross and gave them leave to depart; and then all those birds rose into the air with wondrous songs; and then, according to the cross which Saint Francis had made them, they divided into four parts; and the one part flew towards the east, and the other towards the west, and the one part towards the south, and the other towards the north, and each band went away singing marvellous songs; signifying by this how that Saint Francis, the Ensign of the Cross of Christ, had come to preach to them, and had made the sign of the cross over them, according to which they had scattered to the four quarters of the globe.

Thus the preaching of the cross of Christ renewed by Saint Francis was by him and his brethren borne throughout the whole world; which brethren, even as the birds, possessed nothing of this world's goods, but committed their life to the sole and only providence of God.

Chapter Seventeen

HOW A FRANCISCAN CHILD, WHILE SAINT FRANCIS PRAYED BY NIGHT, SAW CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN MARY, AND MANY OTHER SAINTS WITH HIM.

A VERY pure and innocent child was received into the Order while Saint Francis yet lived; and he abode in a small convent, wherein from sheer necessity the Brethren slept in cast-off rags. Saint Francis coming on a time to this place, at eventide, Complines being said, he went to sleep betimes, to the end that he might rise in the night to pray when the other Brothers slept, as was his wont. The said child determined solicitously to watch the ways of Saint Francis, for the better acquaintance with his sanctity, and especially to know that which he did at night when he arose from bed. And to the end that sleep might not overtake him, this little lad lay down to sleep by the side of Saint Francis, and bound his girdle to that of Saint Francis, that he might have warning if he rose up: and of this Saint Francis knew not aught. But in the first sleep of night, when all the other Brothers slumbered, he arose and found his girdle thus bound, and loosed it piously, so that the child was not awakened; and Saint Francis straightway went out into the Wood, which was hard by that place, and entered into a tiny cell which was there and fell to praying. And after a certain space the child awoke, and finding the girdle loosed

and Saint Francis arisen, he also rose up and went about seeking him; and finding the door open whence he had issued forth into the Wood, he imagined that Saint Francis had gone thither, and he also followed after into the Wood. And having drawn near to the spot where Saint Francis was at prayer, he began to hear the murmur of many voices; and drawing ever nearer to see

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and to understand that which he heard, he beheld a great and wondrous light which shone round about Saint Francis, and therein he saw Christ, and the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Baptist, and Saint John the Evangelist, and a vast multitude

of Angels, who discoursed with Saint Francis. Seeing and hearing these things, the child fell to the earth in a swoon; then, the mystery of this holy apparition completed, and Saint Francis being about to return to the convent, he found the child with his foot, — which is to say, he stumbled over him, — lying like one dead; and from compassion he lifted him up and took him in his arms, as the good Shepherd does his sheep. And then learning from him how that he had seen that selfsame vision, he commanded him never to speak of it to living man, that is, so long as he himself should yet live. The child, growing in the grace of God and the favor of Saint Francis, became a valiant member of the Order; and he, after the death of Saint Francis, revealed the said vision to the Brethren.

Chapter Eighteen

OF THE MARVELLOUS CHAPTER HELD BY SAINT FRANCIS IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS, WHERE WERE ASSEMBLED MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND OF THE BRETHREN.

F RANCIS, faithful servant of Christ, upon a time held a General Chapter at St. Mary of the Angels, at which same Chapter were assembled more than five thousand of the Brethren; and there came thither Saint Dominic, the head and very foundation of the Order of Preaching or Dominican Friars, who was then journeying from Burgundy to Rome. And hearing of the congregation of the Chapter which Saint Francis had called together upon the plain round about St. Mary of the Angels, he turned aside to see it, with seven Brothers of his Order. There was furthermore at this Chapter a Cardinal most piously attached to Saint Francis, to whom he had prophesied that he should yet be Pope, and even so it was; the which Car-

dinal had come expressly from Perugia, where the Court abode, to Assisi; daily he came to visit Saint Francis and his Brothers, and daily he sang the Mass, and daily he preached a sermon to the Brethren in the Chapter; and the said Cardinal felt the utmost devotion and delight when he came to visit that holy College. And seeing the Brethren sitting about St. Mary's, rank on rank, here forty, here an hundred, and here eighty together, all absorbed in discoursing of God, in prayers and lamentation, in acts of charity, and they observing such silence and so great their modesty that no faintest noise nor clamor was to be heard, and marvelling at so orderly and so vast a multitude, with tears and much devotion he said, "Verily, verily this is the encampment and the army of the Knights of God." In all that multitude no man was heard recounting idle tales nor jests; but wherever a band of Brothers was met together, either they prayed, or they read their offices, or they bewailed their sins or those of their benefactors, or they discoursed of the salvation of their souls. Upon that field were huts woven of hurdles or of reeds, divided into bands according to the Friars from various provinces; and hence that Chapter was called the Chapter of the Hurdles and also of the Reeds. Their beds were the bare ground, and some among them had a little straw; their pillows were of stone or of wood; by reason of which all who heard or saw them felt much admiration for their devotion. And so great was the fame of their sanctity, that there came thither from the Papal Court, which was then at Perugia, and from other parts of the Vale of Spoleto, many counts, barons, cavaliers, and other gentlemen, and many country people and Cardinals and Bishops and Abbots with many other of the clergy to see a congregation so holy, so vast, and yet so humble, for never before since the world began had so many holy men been met together; and chiefly they came to see the Head and most Holy Father of these saintly folk, which had robbed the world of so

fair a prey, and gathered together so beauteous and so devout a flock to follow in the footsteps of the true Shepherd Christ Jesus. The entire General Chapter being then assembled, the Holy Father and Commander of all, Saint Francis, with fervent spirit set forth the Word of God, and preached to them in a loud voice the words which the Holy Ghost put into his mouth; and as the subject of his sermon he spake these words: "My sons, great things have we promised unto God: far greater are promised to us of God, if we keep our promises unto Him: and we may surely await those which are promised unto us. Brief are the pleasures of this World; the pains that follow in their train are everlasting; slight are the pangs of this life, but the glory of the other life is infinite." And preaching devoutly upon this text, he comforted and persuaded the Brothers to obedience and reverence for their Holy Mother Church, and to brotherly affection, and to worship God before all the people, to be patient in worldly adversity, and temperate in prosperity, to observe purity and angelic chastity, and to preserve peace and concord with God and with man and with their own conscience, and to love and pursue the most Holy Poverty. And upon this point he spake these words: "I charge you, by the fruits of your holy vow of obedience, that all ye, who are gathered together here, take no thought to yourselves, nor any heed for what ye shall eat, or shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed, but apply yourselves only to praying and praising God; and leave all care for your bodies unto Him, forasmuch as He hath a special care over you." And every man among them, as many as there were there, received this command with a light heart and a cheerful face; and Saint Francis having ended his sermon, they all fell to praying. At which Saint Dominic, who was present at these things, marvelled greatly at the charge of Saint Francis, and held him to be indiscreet, being unable to fancy how so vast a host could exist with-

out taking any thought or heed for the things of the Body. But the great Shepherd Christ the blest, desiring to show how He cares for His Sheep and His singular love for His poor followers, straightway inspired the men of Perugia, of Spoleto, of Fuligno, of Spello, Assisi, and the other regions round about, to bear food and drink to that holy congregation. And lo suddenly a great multitude of men came forth from the said regions, with beasts of burden, horses, and carts, laden with bread and wine, with honeycomb and with cheese, and with other good things to eat, according as Christ's poor had need. Moreover they bore also napkins, jugs, bowls, glasses, and other vessels, enough to serve so vast a multitude: and he counted himself happy who could set forth most offerings or could most acceptably serve; inasmuch as even the knights and barons and other gentlemen, who came thither to see, served before them with great humility and devotion. Wherefore Saint Dominic, seeing these things, and knowing truly that a Divine Providence did work within them, humbly acknowledged that he had falsely judged Saint Francis as indiscreet in his commands; and going before him, he knelt down and humbly confessed his guilt, and added: "Verily God hath an especial care for these poor saints, and I knew it not; and from this time forth I promise to observe the Holy Poverty of the Gospels, and I curse in the name of God all those Brethren of my Order who shall within that same Order presume to hold property." Thus Saint Dominic was much edified by the faith of the most holy Francis, and by the obedience to their vow of poverty displayed by so vast and orderly a community, and by the Divine Providence and the copious abundance of every good thing. At the same Chapter some said to Saint Francis that many of the Friars wore instruments of torture next their skin, for the which thing many fell ill, and hence died, and many were thus prevented from prayer. At which Saint Francis, like a most prudent Father, by his vow

of Holy Obedience charged every man who might wear such instruments of torture, to strip them off and lay them before him, and so it was done; and they reckoned at least five hundred of one kind; and so many were there of iron rings taken from arms and breast, that they formed a little mountain; and Saint Francis left them where they lay. Then, the Chapter being ended, Saint Francis comforted them all mightily, and instructed them how they might live without sin in this wicked world, and sent them all home, every man to his own Province, with the blessing of God, all greatly consoled and full of spiritual joy.

Chapter Nineteen

HOW THE GRAPES IN THE VINEYARD OF THE PRIEST OF RIETI, IN WHOSE HOUSE SAINT FRANCIS PRAYED, WERE TRAMPLED AND PLUCKED BY THE MANY PEOPLE WHICH CAME THITHER TO HIM; AND THEN MIRACULOUSLY MADE MORE WINE THAN EVER BEFORE, EVEN AS SAINT FRANCIS HAD PROMISED. AND HOW THE LORD REVEALED TO SAINT FRANCIS THAT PARADISE SHOULD BE HIS LOT.

SAINt FRANCIS being once afflicted with a grievous malady of the eyes, Cardinal Ugolino, Protector of the Order, for the great love he bore him, wrote to him bidding him come to him at Rieti, where were most excellent doctors for the eyes. Then Saint Francis, having received the Cardinal's letter, set forth first to Saint Damian's, where dwelt Saint Clara, that most faithful spouse of Christ, to give her some little consolation, and thence to journey to the Cardinal. Being there, the next night Saint Francis found his eyes so much worse that he could see no ray of light; hence being unable to depart, Saint Clara made him a little cell of reeds wherein he might better rest. But Saint Francis, what with the anguish of his eyes, and what with the

multitude of rats and mice which did disturb him mightily, could find no Peace, neither by day nor by night. And enduring long these pangs and tribulations, he began to think and to see that this was a scourge sent by God to punish him for his sins; and he began to thank the Lord with his whole heart and with his lips, and then he cried out in a loud voice and said: "My Lord, worthy am I of this and of far worse. My Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who hast shown Thy mercy to sinners by various bodily pains and agonies, grant me, Thy rebellious sheep, grace and power to hold to Thee through all illness, anguish, and pain." And in the midst of this prayer he heard a voice from Heaven, saying, "Francis, answer me: Were all the earth gold, and all the seas and springs and streams precious balm, and all the mountains and hills and rocks precious stones, and you should find another treasure as much more noble than these things as gold is more noble than earth, and balm than clear water, and precious stones than rocks and hills, and with this your affliction you were given that far nobler treasure, should you not then be content indeed and happy of heart?" Saint Francis made answer, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy of such a precious treasure"; and the voice of God said unto him, "Rejoice, Francis, and be exceeding glad, for this is the treasure of Life Eternal, which I reserved for you, and with which from this time forth I invest you; and this your infirmity and affliction is but the pledge and token of that Blessed Treasure." Then Saint Francis called his Companion, with exceeding great joy at so glorious a promise, and said, "Let us set forth to the Cardinal"; and comforting first Saint Clara with holy words, and she humbly taking leave of them, he took his way towards Rieti. And when he had drawn near, so vast a multitude of people came forth to meet him, that he could not therefore enter into the city; but he went to a Church, which was distant perhaps two miles from the town. The citizens, knowing that he

was within that Church, ran thither in such numbers to behold him, that the vineyard of the said Church was laid waste, and the grapes were all gathered; at which the Priest was greatly grieved within himself, and repented that he had received Saint Francis. The Priest's thought being revealed of God to Saint Francis, he called him before him, saying: "Beloved Father, how



many measures of wine does your vineyard yield you in the best of years?" He answered, "Twelve measures." Saint Francis said: "I pray you, Father, patiently to permit me to abide with you yet a few days, forasmuch as I find much rest here, and

suffer every man to pluck the grapes of this your vineyard, for the love of God, and of me a poor beggar; and I promise you in the name of my Master Christ Jesus, that it shall yield you every year twenty measures." And this did Saint Francis to the end that he might sojourn there, where he reaped a rich harvest of souls, from the multitude that came thither; many of whom departed thence drunk with Divine Love, and forsook the world. The Priest had faith in the promise of Saint Francis, and freely suffered all who came to pluck the grapes. Wonderful to relate! The vineyard was laid waste and bare so that scarce a cluster of grapes remained upon the vine. The time for the vintage came, and the Priest gathered in those scanty clusters, and placed them in the press and trod them out, and according to the promise of Saint Francis they yielded him twenty measures of the best wine. By which miracle is manifestly set forth, that as by the merits of Saint Francis the vine stripped of its grapes yet abounded in wine, so the Christian people, made bare of virtues by their sins, through the merits and doctrine of Saint Francis oftentimes abound in the good fruits of repentance.

Chapter Twenty

OF A VERY FAIR VISION, SEEN BY A YOUNG FRIAR, WHO HELD THE COWL IN SUCH ABOMINATION THAT HE WAS DISPOSED TO LAY ASIDE HIS HABIT AND FORSAKE THE ORDER.

A CERTAIN very noble and delicate youth entered the Order of Saint Francis; the which after the space of some days, by the instigation of the Devil, began to hold the Habit which he wore in such abomination, that he seemed to wear the vilest sackcloth; he had a loathing for the sleeves, he abhorred the cowl, and its length and harshness seemed to him an

unbearable burden. And his distaste for the Religious Life ever increasing, he at last proposed to give up the Habit and return to the world. It had become his custom, according as he had been taught by his master, to kneel most reverently at whatsoever hour he might pass before the altar of the Convent whereon the Body of Christ was kept, and drawing his cowl over his head, to bow low with crossed arms. It happened, that upon the self-same night wherein he was to depart and go forth from the Order, he was forced to pass before the Convent Altar; and passing, as was his wont, he knelt and made a humble reverence. And suddenly he was rapt in an ecstasy, and was shown by God a wondrous vision, forasmuch as he saw before him an almost infinite number of saints, walking as in procession, two by two, arrayed in most fair and precious robes of linen, and their faces and their hands shone like the sun, and they passed along with angelic songs and sounds; among which saints were two more nobly clad and adorned than all the others, and they were set round about with such lustre that all who gazed upon them were filled with exceeding great Awe; and almost at the end of the procession he saw one decked with such glory that he seemed a new-made knight, more honored than the rest. This youth beholding the said vision, marvelled and knew not what this procession was meant to signify, and he ventured not to ask any man, but remained struck dumb with the delight of it. And nevertheless all the procession having passed him by, he plucked up his spirits and ran forthwith to the last men in it; and with great dread, he asked them, saying: "Oh, my Beloved, I pray you that it may please you to tell me who are these wondrous beings, which seem so glorious in this procession?" And they made answer: "Know, O son, that we are all Gray Friars, who come hither from the splendors of Paradise." And he again questioned them, saying: "Who are yonder two, who shine yet more radiant than the rest?" They made answer: "Those are

Saint Francis and Saint Anthony; and that last, whom you see so greatly honored, is a Holy Brother who died but newly; who, forasmuch as he fought valiantly against all temptation, and persevered unto the end, we conduct in triumph to the glories of Paradise; and these garments of fair linen, wherewith we are arrayed, are given us of God in exchange for the coarse tunics which patiently we wore in the religious order; and the glorious lustre which you see round about us is given us of God for the humility and patience and for the Holy Poverty and obedience and chastity which we observed unto the end. And therefore, son, hold it not hard to bear the sackcloth of religion which is so fruitful of reward; forasmuch, as if with the sackcloth of Saint Francis, for love of Christ, you despise the world, and mortify the flesh, and fight a good fight against the Foul Fiend, you shall have raiment like unto that which we do wear, and a glory of light." And having heard these words, the youth returned to his senses, and greatly comforted by the vision, he drove far from him all temptation, and confessed his sin before his Superior and the Brethren; and from that time forth he ardently longed for asperity of penitence and of attire, and ended his life in the Order in great holiness.

Chapter Twenty-one

OF THE MOST HOLY MIRACLE, WHICH SAINT FRANCIS PERFORMED,
WHEN HE CONVERTED THE VERY FIERCE WOLF AT GUBBIO.

IN the days when Saint Francis dwelt in the city of Gubbio, there appeared in that region a very great, terrible, and fierce Wolf, the which not only devoured animals, but even also men; insomuch that all the citizens of that place stood in great dread of him; forasmuch as many times he came very near to the town; and nevertheless none who chanced to meet

with him alone could in any wise defend himself against him. And so great was the fear of this Wolf, that none ventured forth into the country. Wherefore Saint Francis, having compassion upon the men of that land, desired to go forth unto this Wolf,—albeit the citizens, every man among them, counselled him against it,—and making the sign of the Most Holy Cross, he set forth into the country round about, he with his Companions, putting all his trust in God. And the others doubting whether they should go farther, Saint Francis took his way towards the place where the Wolf lay. And lo, seeing so many citizens, who had come forth to see such a miracle, the said Wolf came out to meet Saint Francis with open mouth; and drawing near to him, Saint Francis made the sign of the Most Holy Cross, and called unto him, saying: "Come hither, Brother Wolf; I command you in the name of Christ Jesus, that you do no manner of evil either to me or to any other man." Wonderful to relate! Immediately that Saint Francis made the sign of the Cross, the terrible Wolf closed his jaws and gave over running; and hearing this command he came meekly as any lamb, and laid himself down at the feet of Saint Francis. And thereupon Saint Francis addressed him in these words, saying: "Brother Wolf, you do much harm in these parts, and you have done great evil, killing and devouring God's creatures without His sovereign leave. And not only have you killed and devoured beasts, but you have dared to kill men, made in the image of God; for the which thing you are worthy of the gallows, like any thief and villainous murderer; and all the people cry out and murmur against you, and all the land is hostile unto you. But I desire, Brother Wolf, to make peace between you and them, so that you may offend no more, and they shall forgive you all your past offences, and neither men nor dogs shall pursue you any more." Having uttered these words, the Wolf by the motions of his body and his tail and his eyes, and by bowing his head, set forth that he accepted

that which Saint Francis said, and desired to observe it. Then Saint Francis began again: "Brother Wolf, inasmuch as it pleases you to make and to keep this peace, I promise you that I will see to it that your living shall be given you continually, so long as you shall live, by the men of this country, so that you shall not suffer hunger; forasmuch as I am well aware that hunger has caused your every crime. But since I get for you this grace, I require, Brother Wolf, your promise never again to do harm to any human being, neither to any beast. Do you promise?" And the Wolf, by bowing his head, plainly gave sign that he promised. And Saint Francis said farther: "Brother Wolf, I desire you to give me some token of this your promise, although I have full faith in your loyalty." And Saint Francis stretching forth his hand, the Wolf lifted up his right paw and confidently laid it in the hand of Saint Francis, giving him this pledge of his faith, as best he could. And then Saint Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I charge you in the name of Christ Jesus that you now follow me, nothing doubting, and we will go forth and conclude this peace in God's name." And the Wolf obediently followed after him, like any lamb; so that the citizens, seeing this, marvelled greatly. And suddenly the news was spread throughout all the city: so that the people, men as well as women, great as well as small, young as well as old, flocked to the market-place to behold the Wolf with Saint Francis. And all the people being gathered together, Saint Francis rose up and began to preach to them, saying among other things: "Inasmuch as for your sins, God hath permitted certain evil things and sundry pestilences; and far more dangerous as are the flames of Hell, which endure eternally for the damned, than is the wrath of the Wolf, which can but kill the body,— so much more therefore should ye fear the jaws of Hell, when the mouth of one small animal can terrify and alarm so vast a multitude! Turn then, my Beloved, unto God, and repent worthily of your sins, and God shall rid you

of the Wolf in this present time, and of the fires of Hell in time to come." And having preached, Saint Francis said: "Hearken, my Brethren: Brother Wolf, who stands here before you, hath promised and given me a token of his good faith to make peace with you, and never to offend you more in anything whatsoever; and you must promise henceforth to give him daily all that is needful to him, and I will be bailsman for him, that he will firmly hold to his compact of peace." Then all the people with one accord promised to feed him continually. And Saint Francis, before them all, said to the Wolf: "And you, Brother Wolf, do you promise to keep the peace with these people, and to offend no more against men, neither against beasts, nor any other creatures?" And the Wolf knelt before him, and bowed his head, and with submissive motions of body and tail and ears showed in so far as he was able, that he would keep his every promise. Saint Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I desire that even as you gave me a pledge of this your promise outside the gates, so here before all these people you shall give me a token of your good faith, and that you will not cheat me of my promise and security which I have given for you." Then the Wolf, lifting up his right paw, laid it in the hand of Saint Francis. Upon this action and upon those which had gone before, there was such rejoicing and such marvelling in all the people, both at the devotion of the Saint, and at the novelty of the miracle, and at the peace with the Wolf, that all began to cry aloud unto Heaven, praising and blessing God, that had sent unto them Saint Francis, who by his great merits had freed them from the mouth of this cruel beast. And then the said Wolf lived two years in Gubbio, and entered meekly into every house, going from door to door, doing no manner of mischief to any man, and none being done to him. And he was courteously nourished by the people; and roaming thus through the land and from house to house, never any dog barked at his coming in or at his going out. Finally,

after two years, Brother Wolf died of old age; at the which the citizens mourned much, inasmuch as seeing him moving so meekly through the city, they were the more mindful of the virtue and sanctity of Saint Francis.

Chapter Twenty-two

HOW SAINT FRANCIS ON A TIME TAMED THE WILD TURTLE-DOVES.

A BOY one day took a number of turtle-doves, and carrying them to the market-place for sale, he met Saint Francis, who ever felt singular compassion for all gentle animals. Gazing at these turtle-doves with pitiful eyes, he said to the boy: "Oh, good youth, give them to me, I pray you; nor suffer birds so meek and gentle, to whom chaste, humble, and faithful souls are likened in the Scriptures, to fall into the hands of cruel men, who will slay them." The boy, suddenly inspired of God, gave them all to Saint Francis; and he receiving them in his bosom, began to speak sweetly unto them: "O my Sisters, simple, chaste, and innocent doves, why did ye suffer yourselves to be taken? I would now rescue you from death, and make nests for you, that ye may increase and bring forth young, according to the command of the Lord our God." And Saint Francis went forth, and made nests for every one; and they, using them, began to lay eggs, and to bring forth young before the Friars; and so tame were they and consorted so freely with Saint Francis and the other Friars, as they had been hens and ever fed from their hands, and departed not from among them, until Saint Francis with his blessing gave them leave to fly thence. And to the boy who gave them to him Saint Francis said: "Son, you shall yet be a brother in this Order, and shall serve Christ Jesus worthily," and so it was; forasmuch as the boy became a friar and lived in the Order with great sanctity.

Chapter Twenty-three

HOW SAINT FRANCIS SET FREE THE FRIAR WHO HAD SINNED WITH THE AID OF THE DEVIL.

SAINt FRANCIS, being once at prayer within the Convent of Portiuncula, beheld by Divine Revelation all that Convent surrounded and besieged of Demons, after the manner of an huge army; but none among them could enter into the Convent, forasmuch as those friars were of such sanctity, that the Demons found no man among them into whom they might enter. But persevering thus, upon a certain day, one of those same friars grew angry with another one, and took counsel with his own heart, how he might accuse him and take vengeance upon him; for the which thing, he cherishing thus this evil thought, the Demon, finding the door open, entered in and placed himself upon the neck of that same friar. The pious and careful Shepherd, who watched ever over his flocks, seeing therefore that the Wolf had entered in to devour his Sheep, suddenly summoned that friar before him, and charged him that he should forthwith confess the poison of hate conceived of him against his neighbor, whereby he had fallen into the hands of the Enemy. Upon which he, frightened to feel himself read of the Holy Father, straightway made known all his venom and rancor, and revealed his guilt, and humbly begged for justice tempered with mercy; and this done, being absolved from his sin, and having received his punishment, suddenly, before the face of Saint Francis, the Demon departed thence; and the friar thus set free from the hands of the cruel Beast, through the kindness of the good Shepherd, gave thanks unto God: and returning chastened and corrected to the flock of the Holy Shepherd, thenceforth lived in great sanctity.

Chapter Twenty-four

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HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED THE SULTAN OF BABYLON TO
THE FAITH.

SAINTE FRANCIS, led by zeal for the faith of Christ and by his longing for martyrdom, went upon a time across the seas with twelve of his most Holy Companions, bent upon going straight to the Sultan of Babylon; and coming into a region of Saracens, where the roads were guarded by certain men so cruel, that no Christian who passed that way could escape death, it pleased God that they were not slain, but captured, beaten, and bound, and were led before the Sultan. And being before him, Saint Francis, taught of the Holy Ghost, preached so divinely concerning the faith of Christ, how that for that faith he would even walk through fire. Upon which the Sultan began to feel exceeding great admiration for him, both for the Steadfastness of his Faith, and for the Contempt for the World which he perceived in him, — inasmuch as he would receive no gift from him, being yet most poor, — and as well for the martyr's fervor, which was apparent in him. Thenceforth the Sultan hearkened unto him gladly, and begged him that he would return to him oft, freely conceding to him and to his Mates that they should preach wheresoever it seemed good to them; and he gave them a token, which should let no man offend them. . . . Finally, Saint Francis seeing by Divine Revelation that he could reap no more fruits in those parts, disposed all things to return with his companions to the land of the faithful; and calling them all together, he went into the presence of the Sultan, and took leave of him. And then said the Sultan unto him: "Brother Francis, I would gladly become a convert to the faith of Christ, but I fear to do so now; forasmuch, as should my people be

ware of it, they would slay both you and me and all your Companions; and seeing that you may yet do many good works, and I have many weighty matters to despatch, I would not now occasion your death and mine. But teach me, I pray, how I may be saved; I am prepared to do that which you may lay upon me." Then said Saint Francis: "Sir, I now take my leave of you; but when that I am once more in mine own country and ascend into Heaven by the Grace of God; after my death, if it be pleasing in the sight of God, I will send unto you two of my Brethren, from whom you shall receive the holy baptism of Christ, and you shall be saved, even as my Lord Jesus Christ hath revealed unto me. And do you betwixt now and then despatch all your matters, to the end that when the Grace of God shall come to you it may find you well armed with faith and devotion." And thus he promised to do and did. This done, Saint Francis returned home with the venerable train of his holy Companions, and after some years Saint Francis by his bodily death rendered up his soul to God. And the Sultan falling ill was mindful of the promise of Saint Francis, and stationed guards at certain points, and commanded that if two friars should appear clad in the garb of Saint Francis they should instantly be brought before him. At that time Saint Francis appeared unto two friars, and charged them that they should go without delay unto the Sultan and procure his salvation, even as he had promised: the which friars straightway arose, and passing over the sea, were by the said guards led before the Sultan; and seeing them, the Sultan rejoiced greatly and said: "Now, indeed, I know that God hath sent his servants unto me for my salvation, according to the promise made me by Saint Francis through divine Revelation." Receiving then the doctrines of the faith of Christ, and Holy Baptism of those same friars, thus born again in Christ, he died of that illness, and his soul was saved by the merits and the prayers of Saint Francis.

Chapter Twenty-five

HOW SAINT FRANCIS MIRACULOUSLY HEALED THE LEPER IN BODY
AND IN SOUL; AND THAT WHICH THE SOUL SPAKE, ASCENDING
INTO HEAVEN.

THAT true disciple of Christ, Saint Francis, living in this miserable life, with all his strength strove ever to follow Christ, the Perfect Way, whence it oftentimes befell by divine action that whereas he healed a man's body, God did heal his soul in that selfsame hour, even as we read of Christ. And inasmuch as He not only freely became the servant of Lepers, but furthermore ordered that the Brothers of his Order, whether journeying or sojourning anywhere in this world, should become the servants of Lepers for the love of Christ, who for our love was fain to be held a Leper, it fell out that on a time at a Convent near which Saint Francis was then abiding, the Brethren were serving in a hospital for Lepers and infirm; in which was a Leper so peevish, so intolerable, and so arrogant that all men assuredly deemed, and so indeed it was, that he was possessed of a Devil, forasmuch as alike with words and with blows he terribly reviled all them that served him; nay, yet worse, he scandalously blasphemed against the blessed Christ and his most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary, so that none could in any wise be found who could or would serve him. And albeit the Brethren truly study meekly to endure injuries and insults to themselves, to the end that patience may have her perfect work, nevertheless, those to Christ and his Mother their consciences could not suffer, and every man among them determined to leave the said Leper: but this they would not do before they had duly declared their purpose unto Saint Francis, who was then abiding at a Convent hard by. And having signified to him their purpose, Saint Francis came unto that perverse Leper; and drawing nigh to him, he greeted him, saying: "God grant thee peace, my beloved Brother." The

Leper made answer, "What peace can I have of God, Which hath robbed me of peace and of every good thing, and hath made me all corrupt and stinking?" And Saint Francis said, "Son, have patience, forasmuch as the infirmities of the body are given us of God in this world for the salvation of our soul, they being of exceeding merit when they are borne meekly." The sick man replied, "And can I endure the continual Pain that torments me night and day? And not only am I afflicted by mine infirmity, but far worse do I suffer from the Brethren whom you have given me to wait upon me, and they serve me not as they should." Then Saint Francis knowing by a revelation that this Leper was possessed of an evil spirit, went out and prayed, and entreated God piously for him. And his prayer ended, he returned to him again and spake these words: "My Son, I myself will serve you, since you are ill-content with the others." "It pleaseth me well," said the sick man; "but what can you do for me more than the others?" Saint Francis answered, "Whatsoever you would that I should do." Said the Leper, "I would that you wash me, every inch of me; forasmuch as so terribly I stink that I myself can ill endure it." Then Saint Francis straight commanded water to be heated with many sweet-smelling herbs; then stripping him, he began to wash him with his own hands, another Brother pouring on the water; and by a divine miracle, wheresoever Saint Francis laid his holy hands upon him the Leprosy left him and his flesh remained perfectly sound. And even as his flesh began to heal, so too his soul began to be made whole; hence the Leper seeing himself beginning to be cured, began to have great compunction and repentance for his sins, and began to weep very bitterly; for as his body was cleansed of the Leprosy from without by the washing of the water, even so his soul was cleansed of Sin from within by correction and tears. And being wholly healed, alike in body and in soul, he humbly confessed himself guilty, and cried aloud, weeping:

"Woe unto me, for I am worthy of Hell-fire for the injuries and insults which I have heaped upon the Brethren, and for the peevishness and blasphemy which I have manifested towards God." Hence for two long weeks he persevered in bitter tears for his sins, and in beseeching mercy from God, making ample confession to the Priest. And Saint Francis, seeing so plain a



miracle, which God had wrought by his hand, gave thanks to the Lord and departed thence, going into remote countries: forasmuch as from Humility he desired to flee all Vainglory, and in all his acts sought only the Honor and Glory of God and

not his own. Then, as was pleasing in the sight of God, the said Leper, made whole in body and in soul, after two long weeks of penitence fell ill of another malady, and armed with the Sacraments of the Church he died a holy death, and his soul going into Paradise appeared in mid-air to Saint Francis, who was at prayer in a thick wood, and said unto him, "Know you me?" "Who are you?" said Saint Francis. "I am that Leper whom the blessed Christ healed for your merits, and to-day I enter into Eternal Life: for which I give thanks to God and to you. Blessed be your soul and your body; and blessed be your holy words and deeds; forasmuch as through you many souls shall be saved in this world: and know that no day passeth in this world upon which the Holy Angels and the other Saints do not thank the Lord for the sacred fruits which you and your Order have gathered in divers parts of the earth; and praise the Lord, and His blessing shall rest upon your head." And saying these words he rose into Heaven, and Saint Francis was left much comforted.

Chapter Twenty-six

HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED THREE THIEVES AND MURDERERS, AND MADE THEM BRETHREN; AND OF THE MOST GLORIOUS VISION BEHELD OF ONE OF THEM WHO WAS A MOST HOLY BROTHER.

SAINt FRANCIS went once through the desert of Borgo to San Sepolcro, and passing by a Castle, which was called Monte Casale, there came forth to meet him a noble and delicate Youth, who said to him, "Father, I would gladly become one of your Brethren." Saint Francis answered him, "Son, you are young, delicate, and noble; peradventure you could not endure the poverty and rudeness of our life." And he said, "Father, are ye not men like unto me? Then that which ye do bear can

I also endure by the favor of Jesus Christ." This answer was most pleasing to Saint Francis; wherefore, blessing him, he straightway received him into the Order and put upon him the name of Brother Angelo; and so worthily did the Youth comport himself, that but a brief space thence Saint Francis made him Superior of that selfsame Convent of Monte Casale. In those days that region was infested by three thieves of much renown, who greatly plagued the land; the same came one day to the abode of the Brethren and prayed the said Brother Angelo, the Superior, that he would feed them; and the Father Superior answered them after this fashion, reproaching them sorely: "You, Thieves and cruel Homicides, ye are not ashamed to steal the wages of other men's toil; nay, more, bold and saucy that ye are, ye would fain devour the alms which are bestowed upon the servants of God; ye are unworthy that the earth should sustain ye; forasmuch as ye have no reverence either for man, or for the God which created ye. Go, therefore, about your business, and appear no more within these walls"; upon which they, being disturbed, departed thence much wroth. And behold, Saint Francis returning home with bread and a small vessel of wine which he and his Companions had begged, and the Superior, narrating to him how he had driven those men thence, Saint Francis blamed him much, saying that he had borne himself barbarously; inasmuch as sinners were more readily led back to God by mildness than by fierce reproof: hence our Master Jesus Christ, whose Gospel we have promised to observe, said that He came not to heal those who were whole, but the sick; and that He came not to call the just but sinners to repent: wherefore many times He brake bread with them. Seeing, therefore, that you have sinned against charity and against the holy Gospel of Christ, I charge you by your vows of obedience that straightway you do take this Scrip with Bread, and this Vessel of Wine, and hasten after them, over mountains and

through valleys, until you shall find them, and present them with this Bread and Wine in my name; and then shall you kneel before them and humbly confess to them your sin and your cruel conduct, and entreat them then in my name to do no more evil, but to fear God and offend no more against His Holy Name; and if they will do so, I promise to provide for their wants and to give them a constant store to eat and drink: and when that you have told them this, return hither humbly. While the said Superior went forth to do Saint Francis' bidding, he fell on his knees and prayed God that He would soften the hearts of those Thieves and lead them to repent. The obedient Superior meeting them offered them the Bread and Wine and said those words which Saint Francis had taught him. And as it pleased God, those Thieves eating the alms bestowed by Saint Francis began to say to one another: "Woe unto us, hapless wretches! and what bitter pangs shall we endure in Hell! For not only do we rob our fellow-men with stripes and cruel blows, but we also slay them; nor for all these wicked and accursed deeds which we do, do we feel any remorse or fear of God, and behold this holy Brother, which hath followed us hither for a few words with which he justly chid our Evil Craft, and hath humbly confessed to us his guilt, and moreover hath bestowed on us Bread and Wine, and such liberal promises from the Holy Father: verily these Holy Brethren are men of God, which are well worthy of Paradise; and we are sons of everlasting perdition, who are well worthy of the fires of Hell, and every day does but add to our perdition; and we know not whether for the many sins which we have hitherto committed we can yet turn to the mercy of God." These and similar words being spoken by one among them, the others said: "Surely you do speak the truth, but what are we to do?" "Let us go," said one, "to Saint Francis, and if he give us hope that we may still appeal to the Mercy of God for our sins, we will do whatsoever

he may command, and so we may set our souls free from the pains of Hell." This counsel was pleasing in the sight of the others; and all three agreeing together among themselves proceeded in hot haste to Saint Francis and said to him thus: "Father, so great and so terrible are our sins that we fear we can no longer turn to the Mercy of God: but if you have any hope that God will grant us His Mercy, behold we are ready to do whatsoever you shall bid us, and to do penitence with you." Then Saint Francis, detaining them affectionately and with kindness, comforted them with many instances, and assuring them of the Mercy of God, promised them truly to entreat God for them, and showed them that the Mercy of God is infinite: and if we have an infinite number of sins, yet God's Mercy is greater still than our sins, according to the teachings of the Gospel; and the Apostle Paul saith, "Christ came into the world to save sinners." Hearing these words, and other like teachings, the said three Thieves renounced the Devil and all his works, Saint Francis received them into the Order, and they began to do sore penitence; and two of them lived not long after their conversion, and went thence to Paradise. But the third surviving, and meditating on his sins, gave himself such penitence to do, that for fifteen years continually, beside the ordinary fasts, which he observed in common with the other Brothers, three days in every week he fasted upon bread and water, and went even barefoot, and with but a single tunic to his back, sleeping never after Matins. About that time Saint Francis passed away from this miserable life. This Man having then continued the above penitence for many years, behold one night, after Matins, there came to him such a temptation to sleep, that in no manner could he hold out against it and watch, as was his wont. Finally, unable longer to resist or to pray, he went to his bed to slumber; and no sooner had he laid his head upon the pillow, than he was rapt in Ecstasy and led in spirit to a very high mountain, whereon

was a most steep Precipice, and here and there were rocks shivered and splintered and rugged crags amid the rocks: at the sight of this cliff the Soul stood aghast. And the Angel who led this Brother seized him and cast him over the rugged edge of those rocks: and he, striking and rebounding from crag to crag and from stone to stone, at last attained the bottom of that precipice, as it seemed, all dismembered and torn; and lying thus in evil trim upon the ground, he who led him, said unto him, "Rise, for you have yet another journey to go." The Brother replied, "Meseems you be a most cruel and ill-advised man, for seeing me thus dying of the fall which hath so shattered me, you yet bid me rise." And the Angel approached him, and touching him, his every limb was made whole and he was healed perfectly. And then he showed him a vast plain full of sharp Stones and keen Thorns and Brambles; and he told him that he must needs run through all that plain and pass barefoot unto the end, where he beheld a glowing Furnace, into which he must enter straight. And the Brother having crossed the plain with great anguish and pain, the Angel said unto him, "Enter into that Furnace, for so it is ordered." The Friar replied, "Oh, woe is me! what a cruel guide have I! For you see me almost dead from that anguishing plain, and for all repose you bid me enter that glowing furnace." And gazing, he beheld many Demons around about the Furnace with iron pitchforks in their hands, with which, forasmuch as he delayed to enter, they plunged him suddenly into the midst of the fire. Having entered into the Furnace, gazing, he beheld a certain man which had been his Godfather, who burned apace with him; and he questioned him, saying, "O luckless Godfather, how came you hither?" And he answered, "Go but a little further in and you shall find my wife your Godmother, who will tell you the reason of our damnation." The Brother going on, lo! there appeared to him the aforesaid Godmother all smothered and shut within a measure

of wheat blazing brightly; and he asked her, "O luckless and miserable Godmother, how have you come to such cruel torment?" And she answered, "Forasmuch as in the time of the great Famine, the which Saint Francis foretold, my husband and I sold false measure of wheat and of barley, and therefore do I burn bound within this measure." And these words spoken, the Angel which led the Friar haled him out of the Furnace, and then said to him, "Prepare to take a horrid journey, which is yet to make." And he, lamenting, said, "O harshest of guides, who hast no Compassion! you see how I am almost all burned in that Furnace, and yet you would lead me on a dangerous and horrid journey." And then the Angel touched him and made him whole and strong. Forthwith he led him to a bridge, the which could not be crossed without great danger, inasmuch as it was very narrow and straight, and most slippery, and without railing at either side; and beneath it flowed a dreadful river, full of Serpents and Dragons and Scorpions, that it sent up a most exceeding great stench; and the Angel said to him, "Cross this Bridge, and you must cross it from end to end." The Friar replied, "And how shall I cross over, that I may not fall into that perilous flood?" The Angel said, "Follow me, and place your foot where you shall see me place mine, and so you shall come safely over." The Brother passed behind the Angel, as he had taught him, until they came to the midst of the Bridge; and being thus midway the Angel flew thence, and departing from him went up into an exceeding high mountain which stood some distance from the Bridge; and the Brother gazed long at the spot whither the Angel had flown: but remaining without a guide, and looking down, he saw those so dreadful animals standing with their heads out of the water, and with their mouths open ready to devour him if he should fall: and he was in such a terror that he in no wise knew what he should do or say, forasmuch as he could neither turn back nor go on. Hence, seeing how great was

his Tribulation, and that he had no other refuge save only God, he bowed his head and clasped the Bridge in his arms, and with his whole heart and with tears did commit himself to the care of God, that of His most Holy Mercy He might deign to help him. And having prayed, it seemed as if he began to put forth wings: at which he with great rejoicing awaited their further growing, that he might fly thence from the Bridge whither the Angel had flown before. But after a certain space, for the great desire which he had to cross that Bridge, he began to fly; and because, forsooth, his wings were not grown so much, he dropped back upon that Bridge and his feathers fell from him: upon which, yet again he hugged the bridge, and as before committed himself to the care of God; and having prayed, again he felt his wings sprout forth; but as before he did not wait until they had gained their perfect growth: wherefore, striving to fly before the time was ripe, he fell once more upon the Bridge and his feathers dropped yet again. For the which thing, seeing that he fell because of his undue haste to fly, he began to reason with himself: "Assuredly, if my wings sprout for the third time, I will wait until they are great enough for me to fly without another fall." And musing thus, he saw his wings put forth for the third time: and waiting a goodly space, until they should be very great, it seemed to him as if in the first and the second and the third sprouting of his wings had passed away five hundred years or more. At last he rose for the third time, and winged his flight with all his force, and flew high up to that same spot whither the Angel had flown, and knocking at the door of the Palace wherein he was, the door-keeper asked him, "Who art thou, who art come hither?" He answered, "I am a Gray Friar." The door-keeper said, "Await my coming, for I go to summon Saint Francis, to see if he know thee or no." Going thence for Saint Francis, he who was left behind fell to considering the marvellous walls of that Palace; and lo, those walls were

translucent, and of such clearness that he did plainly see the choirs of Saints within and all those things that they did. And standing thus lost in wonder at this sight, lo! Saint Francis came and Brother Bernard and Brother Guy; and after these so great a multitude of saints which had followed in their foot-steps upon earth that they seemed almost numberless: and Saint Francis, drawing near, said to the door-keeper, "Let him enter in, forasmuch as he is one of my Brethren." And no sooner was he entered in than he felt such Consolation and such Sweetness that he forgot all the Tribulations which he had undergone, as if they had never been. And after Saint Francis, leading him by the hand, showed him many wondrous things, and after said to him: "Son, you must return to the world, where you shall tarry seven days' space, wherein you shall prepare yourself diligently with great devotion; forasmuch as after those seven days I shall come for you, and then shall you live with me in this abode of the Blessed." Saint Francis was clad in a marvellous cloak, adorned with glittering Stars; and his five Wounds were like unto five most beauteous Stars, of such splendor that the whole Palace shone with their rays; and Brother Bernard had upon his head a crown of most fair stars; and Brother Guy was decked in wondrous light; and he recognized many other holy Friars in their midst which he had never seen on earth. Thus dismissed by Saint Francis, he returned, albeit reluctantly, to the world. Awaking and returning to his senses and reviving, the Brothers were ringing the bells for Primes: so that that Vision had endured no longer than from Matins unto Primes, although to him it seemed as it had endured for many years. And relating all this Vision to his Superior in its due order, within seven days he began to grow feavered; and the eighth day Saint Francis came to fetch him, even as he had promised, with a vast multitude of glorious Saints, and took his soul thence to the Kingdom of the Blessed, unto Eternal Life.

Chapter Twenty-seven

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HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED TWO SCHOLARS OF BOLOGNA AND MADE FRIARS OF THEM; AND THEN RID ONE OF THEM OF A SORE TEMPTATION WHICH BESET HIM.

SAINt FRANCIS once coming to the city of Bologna, all the people of that town ran out to see him: and so great was the press, that folk had much ado to gain the Market-place; and the Market-place being filled full with men and women and scholars, Saint Francis arose in their midst, and standing upright, did begin to preach those things which were taught him of the Holy Ghost: and so wondrous well did he preach, that it seemed an Angel preached rather than a man; and his celestial words seemed as they were sharp arrows, which pierced the hearts of all them that heard him, for by that preaching a vast host of men and of women were converted to true repentance; among the which were two noble students from the Marches of Ancona; and the one was called by the name of Pilgrim and the other Rinieri; which two after that same Sermon, touched to the soul by divine inspiration, came unto Saint Francis saying that they desired to forsake the world and all its pomp and become one with his Brethren. Then Saint Francis, knowing through revelation that they were sent by God and that they were destined to lead a holy life within the Order, and considering their much fervor, received them joyfully, saying: "You, Pilgrim, shall follow the path of humility while in the Order, and you, Brother Rinieri, shall wait upon the Brethren." And so it was; forasmuch as Brother Pilgrim would never become a Priest, but remained a Lay Brother, although he was most learned, and very wise in canon law. Through this his humility he attained to exceeding great perfection of virtue, so much so that Brother Bernard, the eldest son of Saint Francis, said of him that he was one of the most perfect Friars in this

World. And finally the said Brother Pilgrim, full of virtue, passed on from this life to the Blessed Life, working many miracles both before his death and after. And the said Brother Rinieri devoutly and faithfully waited upon the Friars, living in great sanctity and humility; and he became most familiar with Saint Francis, and Saint Francis revealed many secret things to him.



Being then made Minister of the Province of the Marches of Ancona, he long ruled in the utmost peace and discretion. After a certain space God permitted a sore Temptation to assail his soul; at which he, vastly troubled and vexed, afflicted himself

with Fastings, with Discipline, with Tears and with Prayers, by day and by night, and still could not drive thence that Temptation; but oftentimes he was in extreme despair, inasmuch as for this thing he held himself to be forsaken of God. Being thus desperate, as a last remedy he resolved to go to Saint Francis, thinking thus: "If Saint Francis look graciously upon me and receive me familiarly, as is his wont, I shall believe that God will yet have compassion upon me; but if not, it shall be for a sign that my God has forsaken me." He therefore arose and went unto Saint Francis, who at that time abode in the Palace of the Bishop of Assisi grievously ill; and God revealed to him the whole manner of the temptation and despair of the said Brother Rinieri, and his purpose and his coming. And straightway Saint Francis called Brother Leo and Brother Maximus, and said to them: "Go forth to meet my beloved son Brother Rinieri, and embrace him in my name, and greet him, and say to him that of all the Brethren throughout the world I love him most singularly." They set forth and met by the way Brother Rinieri, and embracing him they told him all those things which Saint Francis had charged them to say. Hence so much comfort and delight did flow into his soul, that he was almost beside himself: and thanking God with his whole heart, he went on until he came to the place where Saint Francis lay ill. And albeit Saint Francis was grievously ill, nevertheless hearing Brother Rinieri's approach, he rose and went out to meet him, and embracing him most sweetly, said: "Brother Rinieri, my beloved son, of all the Brethren throughout the world most singularly do I love thee." And saying these words he made the sign of the most Holy Cross upon his brow, and after kissed him there. And then he said: "My beloved son, God the Lord hath permitted this Temptation for your great increase in merit: but if you desire not this increase, it shall not be thine." Wonderful to relate! So soon as Saint Francis had uttered these words, instantly all Temptation departed from

him, as if he never in his life had felt aught of the kind, and he was left greatly comforted.

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Chapter Twenty-eight

OF AN ECSTASY WHICH SEIZED UPON BROTHER BERNARD AND HELD HIM FROM MATINS EVEN UNTIL NONES, HE BEING ALL THAT SPACE UNCONSCIOUS OF AUGHT.

THE great favor which our Lord ofttimes showed to those poor Evangelists who forsook the world for love of Christ is set forth in Brother Bernard of Quintavalle, who, after taking on the habit of Saint Francis, was very many times absorbed in God, in the contemplation of celestial things. Among others, it happened upon a time that being in Church hearkening to the Mass, and standing with his whole mind bent on God, he became so absorbed and rapt in the Lord, that at the Elevation of the Host he was conscious of naught, neither knelt, nor bared his head, as did the others; but without once winking, did stand steadfastly gazing from the hour of Matins until Nones, as if insensible: and after Nones, returning to himself, did go about the Convent crying in tones of awe and wonder: "O Brothers! O Brothers! O Brothers! There is no man in this land so great, or so noble, to whom, were he promised a most beauteous palace filled with gold, it were not easy to bear most loathsome burdens, to gain so rare a treasure." Now the mind of the aforesaid Brother Bernard was so bent upon this Celestial Treasure promised to all true lovers of God, that for fifteen years continually he went ever with his head and face upraised to heaven; and in all that time he satisfied never his hunger at table, albeit he ate of that which was put before him a little, forasmuch as he said that the mere fact of eating naught constitutes not perfect abstinence, but true abstinence is to be temperate

in all things which are savory in the mouth; and thereby he attained to such clearness and light of intellect that even the great Doctors of the Church had recourse to him for the solution of knotty questions and hard passages of Scripture; and he made plain every puzzle to them, and inasmuch as his mind was freed and abstracted from all earthly things, he, after the manner of a Swallow, flew oft aloft in thought; hence sometimes twenty days and sometimes thirty days he would abide alone upon the top of very high mountains musing upon celestial matters. Wherefore Brother Guy spoke concerning him, saying that this gift was not given to other men which was given to Brother Bernard of Quintavalle; which is to say, that he fed upon the wing like the Swallow; and for this excellent grace, given him of God, Saint Francis gladly and often held converse with him both night and day. Hence they were at certain times found the whole night long absorbed in God in the thick wood, where they had met together to discourse of Him.

Chapter Twenty-nine

HOW THE DEVIL OFTEN DID APPEAR IN THE FORM OF ONE CRUCIFIED UNTO BROTHER RUFUS, TELLING HIM THAT ALL HIS LABOR WAS VAIN, INASMUCH AS HE WAS NOT CHOSEN UNTO ETERNAL LIFE: SAINT FRANCIS LEARNING THIS THROUGH DIVINE REVELATION, SHOWED BROTHER RUFUS THE ERROR IN WHICH HE LAY.

BROTHER RUFUS, one of the most noble men of the city of Assisi, and a comrade of Saint Francis, a man of exceeding sanctity, was upon a time sorely tempted and tormented in spirit concerning the doctrine of Predestination; wherefore he was most melancholy and sad; inasmuch as the Devil put it into his heart that he was damned and was not one

of those elected unto Eternal Life, and that all the good works which he wrought in the Order would avail him naught. And this temptation enduring day after day, he for sheer shame forbearing to reveal aught of it to Saint Francis, yet paused not in praying and fasting: for which thing the Enemy began to heap sorrow upon sorrow, besides the inner battle, shaking him from without with evil visions. Hence he once appeared to him in the form of One Crucified, saying unto him: "O Brother Rufus, why should you thus afflict yourself with penitence and prayers, forasmuch as you are not one of the Elect? And believe me, that I know them whom I have chosen and predestined; and put not your faith in the son of Peter Bernardone, albeit he may tell you to the contrary, and moreover question him not concerning such matters, since neither he nor any man else can know, save only I, Who am the Son of God: wherefore of a verity you may believe me, that you are of the number of the damned; and the son of Peter Bernardone, your father, and also his father, are damned, and whosoever shall follow after them is deceived and misled." And hearing these words, Brother Rufus began to be so overshadowed by the Prince of Darkness, that already he lost all faith and love which he cherished for Saint Francis, and cared not to tell him aught of these things. But that which Brother Rufus told not to the Holy Father was made known to him of the Holy Ghost; hence Saint Francis seeing in spirit the great danger of the said Brother, sent Brother Maximus to summon him; to whom Brother Rufus made answer scornfully, "What have I to do with Brother Francis?" And then Brother Maximus, filled full with divine wisdom, knowing the deceitful wiles of the Devil, said: "O Brother Rufus, know you not that Brother Francis is like to an Angel of God, which hath enlightened so many souls in this world, and from which we receive the Grace of God. Wherefore I would that at all hazards you come before his face with me; forasmuch as I see clearly that

you are led astray of the Devil." And having said this, Brother Rufus was moved, and went forth to Saint Francis, and Saint Francis seeing him from afar began to cry aloud, "O wicked Brother Rufus, in whom have you trusted?" And Brother Rufus drawing near to him, he told him in due order all his temptation brought upon him by the Devil from within and from without, and clearly showed him that he who had appeared to him was the Devil and not Christ, and that in no manner must he consent to his suggestions; but when the Devil should again say to him, "You are damned," he should make answer, "Open your mouth." "And this shall be for a sign unto you that he is the Devil and not Christ: for so soon as you have given him this answer, straightway he shall flee thence. By another token also shall you know that he is the Devil, forasmuch as he hath hardened your heart against all goodness, which thing is proper to his office; but Christ the Blessed did never yet make hard the heart of the faithful, but rather softens it, even as is spoken by the mouth of the Prophet: 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh.' " Then Brother Rufus, seeing that Saint Francis had related to him in due order all the manner of his temptation, stung by his words, began to weep very sore and to adore Saint Francis, and humbly to acknowledge his sin, in that he had hidden his temptation. And thus he was left much comforted and consoled by the admonitions of the Holy Father, and quite changed for the better. Then finally Saint Francis said to him: "Go, son, and confess your sin, nor give over your wonted prayers: and know of a certainty that this temptation shall be of great use and comfort to you, and in a brief space you shall so prove it." Brother Rufus returned again to his cell in the forest; and praying there with many tears, lo! the enemy came again in the semblance of Christ, that is in his outward seeming, and said to him: "O Brother Rufus, did I not tell you to put not your faith in the son of Peter Bernardone, and

that you should not weary yourself with tears and prayers, since you are damned? What avails it to afflict yourself while you live, and then when you die still you will be damned?" And suddenly Brother Rufus replied to the Devil, "Open thy mouth that I may spit upon thee." At which the Devil, waxing wrath, straightway departed thence with such a tempest of wind and so great a rain of stones from Mount Subassio, which was in that neighborhood, that the noise of the stones which fell down was heard for a great space round about; and so great was the tumult that they made, together with the rumbling, that horrid flames of fire flashed through the valleys, and at the sound that they made, Saint Francis with his Companions came out from the Convent in great amaze, to see what strange thing this might be; and even unto this day men may see that exceeding great waste of stones. Then Brother Rufus saw plainly that this was the Devil which had misled him. And returning again to Saint Francis, again he fell before him on the ground and confessed his fault. Saint Francis comforted him with sweet words, and sent him again consoled to his cell, wherein he, praying most devoutly, Christ the Blessed appeared to him, and fired all his soul with Divine Love and said, "Well dost thou, son, to put thy faith in Brother Francis, forasmuch as he who afflicted thee was the Devil; but I am Christ thy Master: and that you may be well assured of this, I give you this sign: while you live, you shall never know any sorrow, neither any grief." And saying these words, Christ departed thence, leaving him with such rejoicing and such sweetness of spirit and elevation of mind that day and night he was absorbed and rapt in God. And from that time forth he was so confirmed in Grace and in the sure sense of his Salvation, that he was wholly changed to another man; and he would fain have remained day and night in prayer and in contemplation of Divine Things, would others have but let him. Hence Saint Francis said concerning him, that Brother

Rufus was canonized of Christ in this life, and that save in his presence he hesitated not to call him Saint Rufus, albeit he yet lived upon this earth.

Chapter Thirty

OF THE GLORIOUS SERMON WHICH SAINT FRANCIS AND BROTHER RUFUS PREACHED AT ASSISI.

THE said Brother Rufus, through continual contemplation, grew to be so absorbed in God that he became almost dumb and insensible, and but very rarely spoke; and withal he had not the Grace, nor the Valor, nor the Eloquence to preach: and nevertheless Saint Francis charged him upon a time that he should go to Assisi, and should preach to the people even as the Lord should inspire him. To which Brother Rufus made answer: "Reverend Father, I beseech you, pardon me and send me not forth, inasmuch as you are well aware that I have no grace in preaching, and am simple and unlearned." And then said Saint Francis: "Forasmuch as you have not obeyed promptly, I command you by your sacred vow of Obedience that you go, clad only in your breeches, unto Assisi, and enter there a church and preach to the people." Upon this command the said Brother Rufus laid off his raiment and went to Assisi and entered into a church, and doing reverence to the altar, went up into the pulpit and began to preach; at which thing the men and boys began to laugh, and said, "Lo, one who doth penitence, lest he grow proud and vain." Meantime Saint Francis, pondering on the ready obedience of Brother Rufus, which was one of the noblest gentlemen of Assisi, and of the hard command which he had laid upon him, began to reproach himself, saying, "Whence hast thou such presumption, son of Peter Bernardone, thou vile and petty fellow, that thou shouldst command Brother Rufus,

which is one of the noblest gentlemen of Assisi, to go forth and preach to the people even as he were mad? In God's name, go forth thou likewise, and prove for thyself even that thou hast commanded of others." And suddenly, in the ardor of his spirit, he also laid off his raiment and went forth to Assisi, and with him went Brother Leo bearing his habit and that of Brother Rufus. And the men of Assisi seeing them in like plight, scoffed at them, holding that they with Brother Rufus were made mad by much Penitence. Saint Francis entered into the church where Brother Rufus was preaching these words: "Fly, my beloved, from the World, and forsake Sin; covet not the goods of others, if you would escape Hell; follow God's commands, love God and your neighbor, if you would gain Heaven; do penitence, if you would possess the Kingdom of Heaven." Then Saint Francis went up into the pulpit; and he began to preach so marvellously of the Vanity of the world, of holy Penitence, of voluntary Poverty, and of the longing after the Celestial Kingdom, and of the nakedness and scorn of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all they who heard his preaching, men and women in great multitudes, began to weep violently with admirable devotion and contrition; and not only here, but throughout all Assisi, upon that day such floods of tears were shed for Christ's Passion, that nothing similar was ever seen. And the people being thus edified and consoled by the act of Saint Francis and Brother Rufus, Saint Francis clad again both Brother Rufus and himself; and thus reclad they returned back to the Convent of Portiuncula, praising and glorifying God, Who had given them grace to win the victory over self by their self-contempt, and to edify the flock of Christ Jesus by their good Example, and to show what it is to despise the World; and that day so great was the devotion which the people felt for them, that he held himself blessed who could but touch the hem of their garments.

Chapter Thirty-one

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HOW SAINT FRANCIS DULY KNEW THE SECRET SOULS OF ALL HIS BRETHREN.

EVEN as our Lord Jesus Christ saith in the Gospel, "I know my sheep and they know me," etc., so the blessed Father Saint Francis, like unto a good shepherd, knew all the merits and virtues of his Companions by divine revelations, and even so was made aware of their defects; for the which thing he knew how to provide for each the best remedy, which is to say, he humbled the Proud, exalted the Lowly, inveighed against Vice, and lauded Virtue, according as may be read in the wondrous revelations which he had concerning his first family. Among the same we learn that Saint Francis once being with the said family in a certain place discoursing of God, Brother Rufus was not among them to hearken unto this discourse, but was lost in a muse in the midst of the wood; proceeding with their discourse of God, lo! Brother Rufus came forth from the wood and passed by somewhat remote from them. Then Saint Francis seeing him, turned again to his Companions and asked them, saying: "Tell me, whose think you is the holiest soul which God hath sent into the world?" And they made answer, saying that they believed it to be his own. And Saint Francis said to them: "Beloved Brethren, I know myself to be the most unworthy and the vilest man whom God hath sent into this world; but see ye not that same Brother Rufus, who even now came forth from the wood? God hath revealed to me that his soul is one of the three most holy souls in the world: and verily I say unto you that I should not hesitate to call him Saint Rufus while he yet lives, forasmuch as his soul is confirmed in grace and sanctified and canonized in Heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ." And these

words Saint Francis uttered not before the face of the said Brother Rufus. How Saint Francis likewise knew the faults of his Brethren may be clearly seen in Brother Elias, whom oftentimes he reproved for his pride; and in Brother John of the Choir, to whom he did prophesy that he should go out and hang himself by the neck; and in that Friar whom the Devil held fast by the throat when he was corrected for his disobedience; and in many other Friars, whose secret faults and virtues he knew clearly through a revelation from Christ.

Chapter Thirty-two

HOW BROTHER MAXIMUS ENTREATED OF CHRIST THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS.

THE first companions of Saint Francis strove with all their strength to be poor in worldly goods and rich in virtues, by which they might gain true riches, celestial and eternal. It happened one day, that they being met together to talk of God, one of them related this parable: "There was a certain man who was a dear friend of God, and had great gifts alike for a life of action and of contemplation, and withal had such exceeding meekness, that he held himself as the greatest of sinners: which meekness sanctified and strengthened him in grace, and made him grow continually in virtue and in the favor of God, and never let him fall into any manner of sin." Brother Maximus hearing such marvellous things concerning meekness, and knowing that it was a treasure of eternal life, began to be so inflamed with love and longing for this virtue of meekness, that, raising his eyes with great fervor to Heaven, he made a vow and most certain promise never more to be merry in this world until he should feel the said virtue abiding perfectly within him; and

from that time forth he would pass almost the entire day shut up within his cell, mortifying himself with fasts, vigils, prayers, and extreme lamentations and tears before God, to the end that he might wring from Him this virtue, wanting which he held himself worthy of Hell, and with which that friend of God, as he had heard, was so plentifully endowed. And Brother Maximus, cherishing thus this desire for many days, it came to pass that he one day entered into a wood, and in the fervor of his spirit wandered on, weeping, sighing, groaning, and beseeching with ardent longing that God would grant him that divine virtue: and forasmuch as the Lord gladly hears the prayers of the contrite and the lowly, Brother Maximus being thus forlorn, a Voice came down from Heaven, and the same called him twice: "Brother Maximus, Brother Maximus!" And he, having spiritual knowledge that this was the Voice of Christ, replied: "My Lord!" And Christ said to him: "What will you give to have this Grace that you ask?" Brother Maximus replied: "Lord, I will give the eyes out of my head." And Christ said to him: "And I desire that you have the Grace, and likewise the eyes." And saying this, the Voice vanished; and Brother Maximus was left behind filled with so much grace of the desired virtue of meekness and of the Light of God, that from that time forth he went ever rejoicing; and oftentimes when he prayed, did rejoice aloud, making a dull noise like that of a dove, — "oo, oo, oo," — and with a shining countenance and a light heart he would linger thus lost in contemplation; and withal, being become very meek, he held himself to be less than all other men. Being asked by Brother James, of Fallerone, why in his rejoicing he changed not ever his tune, he replied with great cheer, That when one thing containeth all good, it boots not to change the measure or the tune.

Chapter Thirty-three

HOW SAINT CLARA, AT THE COMMAND OF THE POPE, BLESSED THE BREAD WHICH WAS ON THE TABLE: WHEREAT ON EVERY LOAF WAS SEEN THE SIGN OF THE HOLY CROSS.

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SAIN'T CLARA, that most devout follower of the Cross of Christ, and the noble offspring of Saint Francis, was of such sanctity that not alone Bishops and Cardinals but even the Pope himself longed with great affection to see and to hear her, and many times visited her in person. Among other times, the Holy Father once went to Monistero to hear her converse of celestial and divine things; and being thus met together, reasoning of divers matters, Saint Clara meantime bade them make ready the tables, and place upon them bread, to the end that the Holy Father might bless it; whence, her spiritual discourse completed, Saint Clara, kneeling with exceeding great reverence, prayed him that it might please him to bless the bread upon the table. The Holy Father replied: "Sister Clara, most faithful among women, I desire that you do bless these loaves, making above them the sign of Christ's Holy Cross, to which you have given yourself entirely, body and soul." Saint Clara said: "Pardon me, Most Holy Father, for I should be worthy of great reproach if before the face of Christ's Vicar on earth, I, who am but a vile and silly woman, should venture to give such blessing." And the Pope made answer: "To the end that it be not reputed presumption, but merely righteous submission, I charge you, by your sacred vow of Obedience, to make the sign of the most Holy Cross above these loaves, blessing them in the name of God." Then Saint Clara, like a true daughter of Obedience, did devoutly bless the bread with the sign of the most Holy Cross. Wonderful to relate! Suddenly upon all those loaves appeared the sign of the Cross most beauteously carven.

Then of those loaves a part were eaten, and a part preserved in token of the miracle. And the Holy Father, after that he had seen that miracle, partaking of the said bread and giving thanks to God, departed thence, leaving Saint Clara with his blessing. In those days Sister Ortolana, the mother of Saint Clara, abode in the Convent, and Sister Agnes, her sister, both of them together with Saint Clara, full of virtue and of the Holy Ghost, and with many other Nuns; unto whom Saint Francis sent many that were sick and infirm; and they by their prayers and by the sign of the most Holy Cross healed them all every one.

Chapter Thirty-four

HOW SAINT LOUIS, KING OF FRANCE, WENT IN PERSON, IN THE GUISE OF A PILGRIM, TO PERUGIA, TO VISIT HOLY BROTHER GUY.

SAINt Louis, King of France, once went on a pilgrimage to see the holy places of the world: and hearing the exceeding great fame of the sanctity of Brother Guy, who was one of the first followers of Saint Francis, he felt a hearty desire, and at length determined to visit him in person; for the which purpose he came to Perugia, where the said Brother Guy was then abiding. And drawing nigh to the gate of the Monastery, in the guise of a poor and unknown pilgrim, with but a few companions, he most persistently demanded Brother Guy, saying to the gate-keeper naught of who he was that asked for him. The gate-keeper then went to Brother Guy and told him that a pilgrim stood without the gate and asked for him: and God revealed and made known to him that this was the King of France: at which suddenly he with great fervor left his cell and ran forth to the gate; and without further questioning, and before even they had set eyes each upon the other, kneeling with

extreme devotion, they embraced and kissed with much familiarity, as they had long been bound by the bonds of friendship: but withal they spoke no word, neither the one nor the other; but stood thus embraced in silence with these tokens of affectionate amity. And having remained thus for a space without speaking a word together, they parted one from the other; and Saint Louis departed thence on his journey, and Brother Guy returned again to his cell. The King being departed, a Friar asked a certain one among his Brethren who that man might be who had so ardently embraced Brother Guy; and he made answer that it was Louis, King of France, who had come thither to see Brother Guy. The same being repeated to the other Monks, they were sore afflicted that Brother Guy had spoken no word with him; and reproving him, they said: "O Brother Guy, wherefore were you so churlish, as when so holy a King came hither from France to see you and to hear wise words from your lips, you spake not unto him?" Brother Guy made answer: "My beloved Brothers, marvel not hereat: forasmuch as neither I could speak a word to him nor he to me; inasmuch as so soon as we were embraced, the light of Divine Wisdom revealed and laid bare his heart to me and mine to him; and thus by Divine Authority gazing each into the other's heart, we knew far better those things which he might have spoken to me and I to him, than had we spoken them with our lips, and with greater comfort than had we striven to set forth with our voices those things which we felt in our hearts; whereas the human tongue being but faulty and ill-fitted to express clearly the secret mysteries of God, it would have rather added to our discomfiture than our consolation; wherefore know that the King departed hence from me wondrous well content and comforted in spirit."

Chapter Thirty-five

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HOW, BEING INFIRM, SAINT CLARA WAS BORNE BY A MIRACLE
UNTO THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS, UPON CHRISTMAS NIGHT,
AND HEARD MASS THEREIN.

SAIN^T CLARA being once infirm of body, so that she could in no manner go forth to say Mass in Church with the other Nuns, when the solemn feast of the Nativity of Christ was at hand all the others went to Matins; and she remained behind in bed ill content that she could not go forth with the rest to receive that spiritual comfort. But Jesus Christ, her heavenly Spouse, loath to leave her so ill content, had her borne by miraculous power unto the Church of St. Francis, and thus was she present at the office of Matins and at the Midnight Mass; moreover, did receive Holy Communion, and was then transported again to her bed. The Nuns returning back to Saint Clara, service being ended at St. Damian's, said to her: "Oh, our Mother, Sister Clara, what exceeding consolation has been ours at this sacred feast of the Nativity! Would it had pleased God that you might have been among us!" And Saint Clara replied: "Thanksgiving and praise give I unto Our Lord Christ Jesus; may His name be blessed, my beloved Sisters and Daughters, forasmuch as I have witnessed every solemn rite of this most holy night, and even greater things than you have seen, to the great consolation of my soul: forasmuch as through the intercession of my Father Saint Francis, and by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I was present in the Church of my venerable Father Saint Francis, and heard all the Office with my bodily as well as my spiritual ears, and the sound of the organ as it was played; and there too I did partake of the most Holy Communion. Wherefore for all these mercies vouchsafed to me, rejoice greatly and thank our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Thirty-six

HOW SAINT FRANCIS SET FORTH TO BROTHER LEO A FAIR VISION
WHICH HE SAW.

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UPON a time Saint Francis was sore infirm, and Brother Leo served him; and said Brother Leo, being at prayer beside Saint Francis, was rapt in Ecstasy, and borne in spirit to an exceeding great stream, broad and brawling. And standing there to note who should pass over, he saw certain heavily-laden Friars enter the Flood, the which were straightway beaten down by the rushing waters and were drowned; certain others came a third of the way over; others reached the middle of the Flood; certain others came almost over to the other shore; who all, from the violence of the Flood, and from the burdens which they bare upon their backs, fell at last and perished miserably. Seeing this, Brother Leo was much moved to pity: and suddenly standing thus, behold there came a great multitude of Monks, without burden or weight or any other thing, whose countenances shone with the light of Holy Poverty; and they entered upon the waters, and passed over without any danger; and seeing this, Brother Leo returned to himself. And then Saint Francis, feeling in spirit that Brother Leo had seen some Vision, called him unto his bedside and asked him concerning those things which he had seen. And Brother Leo relating duly all his Vision, Saint Francis said: "That which you have seen is true. The great river is this world; the Brethren which were drowned in the Flood are they who forsake the calling of the Evangelists, and above all else attain not unto the most extreme poverty; but they who passed over unharmed are those Monks who seek after naught earthly or carnal, neither possess aught of this world's goods, but having naught save a modicum of food and raiment, therewith are well content, following Christ naked on the Cross; and they do bear cheerfully and

willingly the burden and the sweet yoke of Christ and of the sacred vow of Obedience; and hence they pass easily from temporal unto Eternal Life.

Chapter Thirty-seven

HOW JESUS CHRIST THE BLESSED, AT THE REQUEST OF SAINT FRANCIS, DID CONVERT A RICH AND NOBLE KNIGHT, AND MAKE HIM A MONK, THE SAME HAVING MADE GREAT PROFFERS AND PAID MUCH HONOR UNTO SAINT FRANCIS.

Saint Francis, the servant of Christ, coming late one night unto the house of a great and powerful lord, was received and entertained of him, he and his companion, even as they had been Angels of God, with exceeding courtesy and devotion: for the which thing Saint Francis held him in much esteem, considering that upon his entering into the house he had embraced and kissed him with extreme amity, and thereafter had washed his feet and dried them and kissed them humbly, and had made a great fire, and laying the table with many rich meats, continually did serve on him with shining face while he ate thereof. Now Saint Francis having eaten, together with his companion, this gentleman said: "Lo, my Father, I and all my worldly goods are thine: whensoever thou dost want raiment or mantle or whatsoever thing, buy, and I will pay the price; and behold, I am ready to provide for thine every want, forasmuch as by the Grace of God I have wherewithal so to do, inasmuch as I abound in all temporal goods; and hence for love of God Who gave them, I cheerfully do good unto His poor." Upon which Saint Francis, seeing him possessed of such courtesy and blandness, and the bounty which he proffered, conceived such affection for him that, departing thence, he said to his Comrade as he went: "Verily this gentleman would well beseem our Re-

ligion and Company, being so grateful and so pleasing unto God, and so loving and courteous towards his fellow-men and to the poor. Know, beloved Brother, that Courtesy is one of the essential qualities of God, Who maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust, through Courtesy: and Courtesy is also the sister of Charity, which puts out Hatred and preserves Love alive. Because I have known so much divine virtue in this good man, I would gladly take him for my companion: and hence I desire that we may one day return again unto him, if haply God may touch his heart and move him to go along with us to enter upon the service of God; and meantime we will pray God that He may breathe this desire into his heart, and give him grace to execute it." Wonderful to relate! A few days thence, Saint Francis having prayed, our Lord breathed this desire into the heart of that gentleman. And Saint Francis spake to his companion, saying: "Let us go forth, my Brother, to the abode of that courteous man; forasmuch as I have firm faith in God, that he in the Courtesy of temporal things shall give himself to us and become our companion." And they went forth; and drawing nigh to his house, Saint Francis spake to his companion, saying: "Await me here a little, forasmuch as I am fain first to pray to God that it may please Him to prosper our journey; that it may please Christ Jesus to grant unto us poor weak men the noble prey which we hope to capture from the world through the virtue of His most Holy Passion." And saying this, he began to pray at a place whence he might be seen of the said courteous man; hence, as it pleased God, that same, gazing hither and yon, soon saw Saint Francis lost in most devout prayer before Christ, Who with great splendor appeared to him in the said prayer and stood before his face; and as he abode there thus, he saw Saint Francis for a good space lifted up bodily from the earth. For the which thing he was so moved of God and inspired to forsake the world, that presently he went

forth from his palace, and in the fervor of his spirit hastened towards Saint Francis; and drawing nigh unto him as he prayed, he knelt before his feet, and with exceeding great urgency and devotion he besought that it might please him to receive him and to let him do penitence with him. Then Saint Francis, seeing that his prayers had been heard of God, and that the selfsame thing which he desired, this gentleman besought with such urgency, he raised him up, and fervently and joyously embraced and kissed him, most devoutly thanking God, Which had added so noble a knight to his Company. And that gentleman said to Saint Francis: "What commandest thou me to do, my Father? Lo, I am ready for thy command, and to give to the poor all that that I have, and to follow after Christ with thee, thus set free of all temporal burden." And even so he did, according unto the counsel of Saint Francis; for he shared his goods among the poor, and entered into the Order, and lived in great penitence and sanctity of life, and in honest conversation with his Brethren.

Chapter Thirty-eight

HOW SAINT FRANCIS HAD SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE THAT BROTHER ELIAS WAS DAMNED, AND WAS DESTINED TO DIE OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER; WHEREFORE AT BROTHER ELIAS' ENTREATY HE PRAYED TO GOD IN HIS BEHALF AND WAS HEARD.

Saint Francis and Brother Elias once abiding together in the selfsame Convent, Saint Francis had a revelation from God that Brother Elias was damned, and was destined to renounce his faith and finally die outside of the Order. For the which thing Saint Francis conceived such displeasure against him, that for a space he spake not to him, neither held he any converse with him; and if at any time it happened that Brother Elias came forth to meet him, he would turn aside and take an-

other road, that he might not meet with him; at which Brother Elias began to note and to understand that Saint Francis was much displeased with him; hence, desiring to know the cause, he one day accosted Saint Francis to speak with him; and Saint Francis shunning Brother Elias, he retained him courteously perforce, and began to entreat him discreetly that it would please



him to signify to him the cause for which he thus shunned his company and all converse with him. And Saint Francis made answer: "The cause is namely this: forasmuch as it has been revealed to me of God that you for your sins shall renounce

your faith and shall die outside of the Order, and also God hath revealed to me that you are accursed and damned." Hearing this, Brother Elias spake thus: "Reverend Father, I beseech you for the love of Jesus Christ that you shun me not for this, neither drive me from you; but like unto a good Shepherd, following after the example of Christ, recover and receive again the sheep which must perish if you aid him not; and pray unto God for me that, if it may be, He revoke the sentence of my damnation; forasmuch as it is written that God will change His decree if the sinner turn from his sin: and so great is my faith in your prayers, that were I in the midmost part of Hell and you sent up a prayer to God for me, I should feel a certain ease; therefore I pray you yet again to recommend me, a sinner, unto God, Which came into the world to save sinners, that He will grant me His Mercy." And this Brother Elias said with great devotion, ay, even with tears; upon which Saint Francis, like a pious Father, promised to pray to God for him; and so he did. And praying to God very fervently for him, he knew by revelation that his prayer was heard of God, in so far as concerned the revocation of the sentence of Brother Elias' damnation, for finally his soul should not be damned; but assuredly he would forsake the Faith and die outside the Order. And even so it happened; forasmuch as Frederic, King of Sicily, rebelling against the Church, and being excommunicated by the Pope, he and whosoever should give him aid or counsel, the said Brother Elias, who was held to be one of the most wise men in the world, being summoned by that same King Frederic, joined himself unto him, and became a rebel to the Church and an apostate from the Order: for the which thing he was excommunicated of the Pope, and stripped of his habit by Saint Francis. And being thus excommunicate, and falling very ill, a certain lay Brother among his Brethren, which had remained in the Order and was a man of good and honest life, hearing of his sore in-

firmity, went to visit him; and among other matter said to him: "My beloved Brother, it grieves me much that you should be excommunicate and driven out from your Order, and that even so you must die; but if you can perceive any mode or manner by which I may rescue you out of your peril, I will cheerfully endure any suffering for your sake." Brother Elias made answer: "My Brother, I see no other manner than that you should betake yourself to the Pope, and entreat him that for the love of God, and of Saint Francis his servant, through whose admonitions I was led to forsake the world, he absolve me from his excommunication and restore to me the habit of my Order." Thus he spake to his Brother, who cheerfully undertook any labor so that he might but be saved: and departing thence from him, he threw himself at the feet of the Holy Father, humbly beseeching him that he would show mercy to his Brother, for the love of Christ and of Saint Francis his servant. And as it pleased God, the Pope granted him his leave to return again, and if he found Brother Elias still alive, absolve him in his name from excommunication, and restore to him his habit; upon which he set forth rejoicing, and with great speed came again to Brother Elias, and found him alive, albeit at the point of death, and set him free from the ban of the Church; and putting on him again his habit, Brother Elias passed away from this life, and his soul was saved through the merits of Saint Francis and by his prayers, in which Brother Elias had put such great faith.

Chapter Thirty-nine

OF THE MARVELLOUS SERMON WHICH WAS PREACHED IN THE CONSISTORY BY SAINT ANTONY OF PADUA, A GRAY FRIAR.

THAT marvellous vessel of the Holy Ghost, Saint Antony of Padua, one of the chosen Disciples and companions of Saint Francis, who was called of Saint Francis his

Vicar, once preached in the Consistory before the Pope and his Cardinals; in which Consistory there were men of divers nations; namely, Greeks, Latins, French, Germans, Slavs, and English, and men speaking other divers tongues. Fired by the Holy Ghost, so efficaciously, so devoutly, so subtly, so sweetly, so clearly, and so plainly did he set forth the Word of God, that all they which were present at the Consistory, of whatsoever divers tongues they were, clearly understood all his words distinctly, even as he had spoken in the language of each man among them; and they all were struck dumb with amaze, and it seemed as that ancient miracle of the Apostles had been renewed, when as at the time of the Pentecost they spake by virtue of the Holy Ghost in every tongue; and they said one to another with admiration and awe: "Is not he who preaches come out from Spain? and how do we hear in his discourse every man of us the speech of his own land?" Likewise the Pope, considering and marvelling at the profundity of his words, said: "Verily this man is the Ark of the Covenant and the Vehicle of the Holy Gospel."

Chapter Forty

OF THE MIRACLE WHICH GOD PERFORMED WHEN SAINT ANTONY,
BEING AT RIMINI, PREACHED TO THE FISHES OF THE SEA.

OUR Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, desiring to set forth the great sanctity of His most faithful servant Saint Antony, how devout a thing it was to hear his preaching and his Holy Doctrines, He reproved the folly of heretics and infidels through unreasoning beasts, notably the fishes, as of old in the Bible He chid the ignorance of Balaam through the mouth of the Ass. Hence, Saint Antony being at

Rimini, where there was a great multitude of heretics, desiring to bring them back to the light of the true faith and to the ways of virtue, for many days did preach and set forth to them the faith of Christ and of the Holy Scriptures: but they, not only consenting not to his Holy Words, but even like hardened and obstinate sinners refusing to hearken unto him, Saint Antony one day by Divine Inspiration went forth to the banks of the river, close beside the sea; and standing thus upon the shore betwixt sea and stream, he began to speak in the guise of a sermon in the Name of God unto the fishes: "Hear the Word of God, ye fishes of the sea and of the stream, since heretics and infidels are loath to listen to it"; and having uttered these words, suddenly there came towards him so great a multitude of fishes, great, small, and middle-sized, as had never been seen in that sea, or in that stream, or of the people round about; and all held their heads up out of the water, and all turned attentively towards the face of Saint Antony, and the greatest peace and meekness and order prevailed: insomuch that next the shore stood the lesser fish, and after them came the middle fish, and still after them, where the water was deepest, stood the larger fish. The fish being thus ranged in order, Saint Antony began solemnly to preach, speaking thus: "My Brothers the fish, you are greatly bounden, so far as in you lies, to thank your Creator that He hath given you so noble an element for your habitation; so that at your pleasure you have fresh waters and salt; and He hath given you many shelters against storm. He hath also given you a clear and lucid element, and food, by which you may live. God, your courteous and benign Creator, when he created you, commanded you to grow and multiply, and He gave you His blessing: then when the great Flood swallowed up the World, and all the other animals were destroyed, God preserved you only without injury or harm. Almost hath He given you wings, that you may roam whithersoever it pleases you. To you was it

granted, by God's command, to preserve the prophet Jonah, and after the third day to cast him up upon the land safe and sound. You offered tribute to our Lord Jesus Christ, which He, poor and lowly, had not wherewithal to pay. You were the food of the everlasting King Christ Jesus, before the resurrection and again after it, by a strange mystery; for the which things greatly are you bounden to praise and bless God, Which hath given you such great and so many benefits, more than to any other creatures." Upon these and other similar words and teachings of Saint Antony the fishes began to ope their mouths, and to bow their heads; and by these and other signs of reverence, according as it was possible to them, they praised God. Then Saint Antony, seeing such reverence in the fishes towards God their Creator, rejoicing in spirit, cried aloud and said: "Blessed be the eternal God, since fishes of the waters honor Him far more than heretic men, and the unreasoning beasts more readily hearken to His Word than faithless men." And as Saint Antony continued his preaching, the multitude of fishes was increased yet more, and none departed from the place which he had filled. Upon this miracle the people of the town began to hasten forth, and among them were also the aforesaid heretics; the which, seeing so manifest and marvellous a miracle, felt their hearts sorely pricked, and fell with one accord at Saint Antony's feet, to hear his word. Then Saint Antony began to preach of the Catholic faith; and so nobly did he discourse, that he converted all those heretics and turned them to the true faith of Christ; and all the faithful were comforted with great joy, and were confirmed in their faith. And this done, Saint Antony dismissed the fishes with the blessing of God; and they all departed with marvellous signs of rejoicing and likewise the people. And then Saint Antony stayed in Rimini for many days, preaching, and reaping a spiritual harvest of souls.

Chapter Forty-one

HOW THE VENERABLE BROTHER SIMON FREED FROM SORE TEMPTATION A BROTHER WHICH FOR THAT SAME CAUSE WAS ABOUT TO FORSAKE THE ORDER.

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IN the beginning of the Order of Saint Francis, while he yet lived, there came into the Order a young man of Assisi, which was called Brother Simon; the which God adorned and endowed with so much grace, such power of contemplation and elevation of mind, that throughout his life he was ever a mirror of sanctity, according as I have heard from them which long abode with him. But very rarely was he seen outside his cell, and if ever he did abide with the Brothers, he continually did discourse of God. Never had he studied the laws of grammar, and nevertheless discoursed so deeply and so loftily of God and of the love of Jesus Christ, that his words seemed supernatural words; hence one evening he being gone into the wood with Brother James of Massa to converse of God, and speaking most sweetly of the Divine Love, they remained all night in such discourse, and at dawn of day it seemed as they had tarried there but a very brief space, according as the said Brother James did tell me. And the said Brother Simon possessed in such suavity and sweetness of spirit the divine and loving Light of God, that oftentimes when he did feel it descending upon him he would take to his bed; forasmuch as the tranquil suavity of the Holy Ghost required of him not alone repose of soul but likewise of body; and in such Divine Visitations he was oftentimes absorbed in God, and became wholly insensible to all earthly things. Hence, once being thus rapt in God, and insensible to the world, the Divine Love burned within him, and he felt naught external with his bodily senses. A Brother desiring to have proof of this, to see if it were even as it seemed, went and took a coal of fire and laid

it to his bare foot; and Brother Simon knew naught of it, and it made no mark upon his foot, albeit it was held there for a great space, until it went out of itself. The said Brother Simon when he took his seat at table, before ever he partook of bodily food, took for himself and did break the spiritual food, discoursing of God. By his devout conversation he once converted a young man of San Severino, who was in his time a most vain and worldly youth, and was of noble blood and very delicate of his body: and Brother Simon, receiving the young man into the Order, retained his secular garb in his keeping; and he sojourned with Brother Simon to be taught of him the meet observances. Wherefore the Demon, who labors to distort all good, beset him with such sore desire and ardent temptation to sin, that in no manner could he resist; wherefore he went forth to Brother Simon and said to him: "Give me again my raiment which I wore in the world, forasmuch as I can no longer stand up against temptation." And Brother Simon, having much compassion for him, said to him, "Sit here, my son, a little space with me." And he began to talk with him of God in such manner that every temptation departed from him; and yet again the temptation returned, and he again entreated that his raiment might be restored unto him. And Brother Simon drove it thence with discourse of God. And this he did many times; and finally one night the said temptation assailed him so sore, more than was its wont, that being unable by any manner of means to hold out against it, he went forth to Brother Simon, entreating that his worldly raiment might be given him again, for in no manner might he linger longer there. Then Brother Simon, according as was his wont, bade him sit beside him; and as he spake of God, the young man did lay his head in Brother Simon's lap, for pure melancholy and grief. Then Brother Simon, for the great compassion which he had, raised his eyes to Heaven and made a prayer, beseeching the Lord most devoutly for him, and was

rapt and heard of God: hence returning again to his senses, the young man felt himself wholly freed from that temptation, as if he had ne'er felt aught of it: nay more, the ardor of temptation being converted into the ardor of the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as he was brought near to the Living Coal, which is Brother Simon, he became all inflamed with the love of God and his fellow-man; insomuch that, a malefactor being once taken, both whose eyes were to be plucked from him, he, that is, Brother Simon, through compassion went forth fervently to the Prior; and in full Council, and with many tears and devout prayers, he entreated that from him might be plucked out one eye, and from the malefactor another, to the end that the latter might not be deprived of both. But the Prior and Council, seeing the great fervor of the brotherly love of this Friar, did pardon both the one and the other. The said Brother Simon being once at prayer within a wood, and feeling much consolation in his own soul, a band of crows began to confound him with their chatter, at which he commanded them in the name of Jesus that they should depart and return again no more; and the said birds, departing thence, were thenceforth seen no more, neither were they heard either there or in all the region round about. And this miracle was known to all the territory of Fermo, wherein the said Convent stood.

Chapter Forty-two

OF THE FAIR MIRACLES WHICH GOD WROUGHT THROUGH THOSE HOLY BRETHREN, BROTHER WELCOME, BROTHER PETER OF MONTICELLO, AND BROTHER CONRAD OF OFFIDA: AND HOW BROTHER WELCOME BORE A LEPER FIFTEEN MILES IN MOST BRIEF SPACE: AND TO THE ONE SPAKE SAINT MICHAEL, AND TO THE OTHER CAME THE VIRGIN MARY AND LAID HER SON IN HIS ARMS.

THE Province of the Marches of Ancona was of old adorned with holy and exemplary Monks, even as the Heavens are adorned with stars; which same Monks, like unto the luminaries of the sky, did illumine and adorn the Order of Saint Francis and the world by their example and their doctrine. First among these men was Brother Lucius Antico, who was indeed a shining light for sanctity and burned with Divine Charity; whose glorious tongue, informed of the Holy Ghost, gathered wondrous fruit by its preaching. Another was Brother Welcome of San Severino, which was seen by Brother Maximus lift up into the air for a great space, he being at prayer in the wood; for the which miracle the devout Brother Maximus, being then parish priest, left his parish and became a Gray Friar; and was of such great sanctity that he wrought many miracles both while he lived and in his death, and his body lies at Murro. The aforesaid Brother Welcome, tarrying once alone at Trave Bonanti, to watch and wait upon a Leper, being commanded of the Prelate to depart thence and go to another Convent which was fifteen miles away, being loath to leave that Leper, with great ardor of brotherly love took him and put him on his back, and bore him from dawn of day even until the rising of the sun all that space of fifteen miles, unto that same Convent whither he was sent, which was called Mount Sancino; which distance, had he been an eagle, he could not so swiftly have flown in so brief a space: and great were the awe and admiration at this divine miracle throughout all the land. Another was Brother Peter of Monticello, which was seen of Brother Servetus of Urbino (he being then Prior of the ancient Convent of Ancona), raised up bodily above the earth some five, ay, six cubits, even unto the feet of Christ crucified within the Church before whose image he tarried in prayer. And this Brother Peter, abstaining once upon the Fast of the Archangel Saint Michael with much devotion, and being at the last of that Fast in the

Church at prayer, was heard by a youthful Friar (who studiously remained hidden below the high altar, to see some act of his sanctity) discoursing with the Archangel Saint Michael; and the words that they spake were these. Said Saint Michael: "Brother Peter, faithfully you have plagued yourself for me, and in divers ways have afflicted your body: lo, I am come to comfort you, to the end that you may require of me whatsoever grace you will, and I will entreat it for you of God." Brother Peter replied: "Most Holy Prince and Captain of the Celestial Host, and most faithful partisan of Divine Love and pious protector of souls, I beseech you grant me this grace; that you will be pleased to entreat of God that He may forgive me all my sins." Saint Michael made answer: "Ask some other grace, for this I most cheerfully grant you." And Brother Peter asked naught else save only this; and the Archangel concluded: "For the faith and devotion which you have in me, I give you this grāce which you have asked, and likewise many others." And their converse ended, which had lasted for a great space, the Archangel Saint Michael departed thence, leaving him exceeding comforted.

In the time of this Holy Brother Peter lived the Holy Brother Conrad of Offida, who sojourning together with him in the same Convent of Forano in the territory of Ancona, the said Brother Conrad went forth one day into the wood to meditate on God, and Brother Peter went secretly after him to see what might befall him; and Brother Conrad began to lift up his voice in prayer, to pray most devoutly to the Virgin Mary with much piety, that she would obtain for him from her Blessed Son this Grace,—that he might feel a little of that same bliss which Saint Simon felt upon the Feast of the Purification, when he did bear Jesus, the Blessed Saviour, in his arms. And having prayed thus, the all-merciful Virgin Mary heard his prayer; for lo! the Queen of Heaven appeared to him with her Blessed Son in her arms, with

exceeding great light; and drawing near unto Brother Conrad, she laid that Blessed Babe upon his arm; and he receiving Him most devoutly, embracing and kissing Him and pressing Him to his breast, languished quite away, and was consumed with Divine Love and inexplicable consolation. And likewise Brother Peter, who had seen all these things from his hiding, felt the most extreme bliss and comfort within his soul. And the Virgin Mary departing thence from Brother Conrad, Brother Peter retired in haste to the Convent lest he should be seen of him; but after, when Brother Conrad returned again jocund and alert, Brother Peter said to him: "Oh, what heavenly great consolation was yours this day!" Brother Conrad said, "What sayest thou, Brother Peter; and what dost thou know of that which I have had?" "Well I know, well I know," said Brother Peter, "how that the Virgin Mary with her Blessed Son hath visited thee." Then Brother Conrad, who being truly humble, desired to be secret with the Graces of God, besought him that he should speak no word of this to any man; and so great was the love betwixt those twain from that day forth, that they seemed to have but one heart and one soul between them in all things. And the said Brother Conrad did once, at the Convent of Siruolo, set free a woman who was possessed of a devil, praying for her all one night, and at dawn of day did flee thence lest he should be sought out and honored of the people.

Chapter Forty-three

HOW BROTHER CONRAD OF OFFIDA DID CONVERT A YOUNG MONK WHO AFFLICTED THE OTHER FRIARS. AND HOW THE SAID YOUNG MONK, COMING TO DIE, DID APPEAR TO THE SAID BROTHER CONRAD, ENTREATING THAT HE WOULD PRAY FOR HIM: AND HOW HE SET HIM FREE FROM THE VERY GREAT PAINS OF PURGATORY.

THE said Brother Conrad, a wondrous partisan of Evangelic Poverty and the Rule of Saint Francis, was so religious in his life and of so great merit towards God, that Christ the Blessed honored him with many miracles both in his life and in his death; among which upon a time, being come to the Convent of Offida a stranger, the Brethren entreated him for the love of God and of true charity to admonish a young Monk who did abide in that Convent, the which bore himself so childishly, disorderly, and dissolutely that he disturbed both old and young of that Convent, heeding little or naught the divine offices, or other Ordinances of the Rule. Upon which Brother Conrad, through compassion for the young man and at the prayers of the Brothers, did one day call that youth apart; and in a fervor of brotherly love spake to him such efficacious and devout words of admonition, that by the action of Divine Grace he suddenly became, from a child, an old man in his habit, and so obedient and benign and diligent and devout, and moreover so peaceful and so docile, and so studious of all virtuous deeds, that even as before the whole Convent had been disturbed through him, so now all were made comfortable and content through him, and they loved him much. It happened, as it pleased God, that thereafter, after his conversion, the said youth died; at which the said Brothers mourned. And a few days after his death his soul did appear to Brother Conrad, he being devoutly at prayer before the altar of their said Convent, and saluted him piously, as a father; and Brother Conrad asked him: "Who art thou?" The same made answer and said: "I am the Soul of that young Monk which did die a brief space since." And Brother Conrad said: "Oh, my most beloved Son, how is it with thee?" The same made answer: "Through the Grace of God and thy doctrines it is well with me, forasmuch as I am not damned: but for certain of my sins, of which I had not time sufficiently to purge me, I must endure the worst pains of Purgatory; thus I

beseech thee, Father, as by thy piety thou didst succor me in my living, so now it may please thee to succor me in my torment, reciting certain Paternosters for me; for thy prayers are most acceptable in the sight of God." Then Brother Conrad, consenting kindly to his entreaties, and saying the Paternoster for him but a single time together with the *Requiem aeternam*, that Soul cried out: "Oh, beloved Father, what well-being and refreshment I perceive! Now, I beseech thee, say them yet once again." And Brother Conrad did so; and he having recited them, the Soul said: "Holy Father, when thou dost pray for me I feel much ease: hence I entreat thee that thou cease not from worship and praise for me." Then Brother Conrad, seeing that that Soul was thus aided by his prayers, recited for him an hundred Paternosters; and when that he had ended them, that Soul did say: "I thank thee, beloved Father, in the name of God, for the brotherly love which thou hast shown towards me; forasmuch as through these thy prayers I am set free from all pains, and am about to enter the kingdom of Heaven." And saying this, that Soul departed thence. Then Brother Conrad, to the end that he might give comfort and joy to the Brethren, recited to them all this Vision in due order. And thus the Soul of that youth entered Paradise through the merits of Brother Conrad.

Chapter Forty-four

HOW THE MOTHER OF CHRIST AND SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST DID APPEAR UNTO BROTHER CONRAD, AND DID TELL HIM WHICH OF THEY TWAIN DID GRIEVE MOST SORE FOR THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

IN the days when there abode together in the territory of the Marches of Ancona, at the Convent of Forano, Brother Conrad and the aforesaid Brother Peter, which were two

shining stars of the Province of the Marches, and two celestially-minded men, forasmuch as between them was so much Love and so much Charity that they seemed but one heart and one soul, they were both bound together by this contract: that every consolation which the Grace of God should grant them they should mutually reveal the one to the other in all brotherly affection. This contract being signed and sealed, it befell that Brother Peter being one day at prayer, and meditating most devoutly upon the Passion of Christ, and how the most Blessed Mother of Christ and John the Evangelist, His most dearly loved Disciple, and Saint Francis, were portrayed at the foot of the Cross, crucified with Christ by mental pangs and dolor, he was seized with a longing to know which of these three did grieve most sore for Christ's Passion, — whether the Mother who bare Him, or the Disciple who had slept upon His bosom, or Saint Francis, which was crucified with Christ; and lingering thus lost in these pious musings, the Virgin Mary appeared unto him with Saint John the Evangelist, and with Saint Francis, arrayed in most fair raiment of beatific glory; but behold! Saint Francis seemed clad in more beauteous garb than Saint John. And Peter being all alarmed at this vision, Saint John comforted him, and said to him: "Fear not, beloved Brother, forasmuch as we are come to comfort thee in thy doubt. Know, then, that the Mother of Christ and I did grieve beyond all other creatures at the Passion of Christ; but after us, Saint Francis felt greater pangs than any other, and hence dost thou see him clad in such glory." And Brother Peter asked him: "Most holy Apostle of Christ, why seemeth the raiment of Saint Francis more fair than thine?" Saint John made answer: "The reason is this: forasmuch as when he lived on earth he did wear raiment more vile than I." And saying these words, Saint John bestowed on Brother Peter a glorious garment which he held in his hand, and said to him: "Take this garment, which I have brought to

give to thee." And Saint John desiring to clothe him with this garment, Brother Peter fell to the ground in a maze, and cried aloud: "Brother Conrad, dearest Brother Conrad, succor me straight; come hither and see marvellous things." And as he spake these holy words that sacred vision vanished quite away. Then Brother Conrad coming there, he told him all things in due order as they had happened; and they gave thanks unto God.

Chapter Forty-five

OF THE CONVERSION AND LIFE AND MIRACLES AND DEATH OF THAT
HOLY BROTHER, JOHN OF THE PEN.

BROTHER JOHN OF THE PEN being yet a child and not a churchman, in the Province of the Marches of Ancona, one night there appeared before him a most beauteous boy, who cried aloud unto him: "John, go forth unto St. Stephen's Church, where there preacheth one of my Gray Friars; believe thou in his teaching, and hearken to his words, forasmuch as I have sent thee thither: and this done, thou must take a far journey, returning then again to me." Upon which forthwith he rose up, and felt a marvellous change within his soul; and going forth to St. Stephen's Church, found there a great multitude of men and women tarrying to hear the preaching. And he who was to preach there was a certain brother, Brother Philip by name, which was one of the first Friars who had come into the Marches of Ancona; and but few convents had as yet been founded in that region. Going up into the pulpit, this Brother Philip began to preach; and he preached most piously, not with words of human wisdom, but by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, foretelling the kingdom of Eternal Life. And the sermon ended, the said child went forth to the said Brother Philip, and

spake to him: "Father, if it please thee to receive me into the Order, I will cheerfully do penance, and will serve our Lord Jesus Christ." Brother Philip seeing and recognizing in the said child a marvellous innocence and a prompt desire to serve God, said to him: "Come to me on such a day at Reconati, and I will see that thou art received; for in that place we do intend to make the Provincial Chapter-house"; at which the child, which was most exceeding simple, bethought himself that this was the far journey which he must take, according unto the revelation which had been made unto him, and thereafter he should go thence to Paradise; and so he thought he must do so soon as he had been received into the Order. He went thither, therefore, and was received: and seeing that his thoughts were not then fulfilled, the Head of the Chapter saying that whosoever would go forth through the Province of Provence, through the merit of his holy vow of Obedience, he would cheerfully give him leave so to do, he felt a great desire to go thither, thinking in his heart that even this was the great journey which he was to take before he might reach Paradise; but feeling shame to tell his thoughts, at last he confided them to the aforesaid Brother Philip, who had had him taken into the Order, begging him lovingly that he would entreat for him leave to go into the Province of Provence. Then Brother Philip, seeing his purity and his holy purpose, begged for him this grace: whence Brother John with great rejoicing set about his departure, full of the thought that, his journey ended, he should go thence to Paradise. But, as it pleased God, he sojourned in the said Province twenty-five years in this expectation and desire, living in extreme honesty and sanctity and exemplarity, growing ever in virtue and in the Grace of God and of the people, and was supremely loved alike of Monks and laymen. And Brother John being one day devoutly at prayer, and weeping and wailing because his desire was not fulfilled, and that his pilgrimage through this life was too long

protracted, there appeared unto him Christ the Blessed, at whose aspect his whole soul was melted within him, and He spake to him thus: "Son, Brother John, require of Me what thou wilt." And he made answer: "My Lord, I know not what other thing to ask of Thee than this, since I desire naught else: but this only do I pray Thee, that Thou wilt forgive me all my sins, and wilt grant me grace to see Thee yet once again, when I may have greater need of Thee." Jesus said: "Thy prayer is granted"; and saying this, He departed thence, and Brother John was left wholly comforted. At the last the Monks of the Marches, hearing the same of his holiness, spake such great things of him to the Vicar General, that he commanded him by his vow of Obedience to return into the Marches; which command he receiving, set forth joyfully, thinking that, the journey over, he should surely rise to Heaven, according to the promise of Christ. But being returned again into the Province of the Marches, he lived there thirty years, and was not known of any of his kindred; and every day he waited for the Mercy of the Lord, that He should fulfil His promise. And in those days he many times filled the office of Prior with much discretion; and Our Lord wrought many miracles through him. And among other gifts which he had of God, he had the spirit of prophecy; hence once, he going forth from the Convent, a certain one among his novices was attacked by a Demon and so sorely tempted that he, consenting unto the temptation, determined within himself to forsake the Order so soon as Brother John should return again from abroad; which thing, both temptation and deliberation, being made known to Brother John through the spirit of prophecy, he straightway returned home, and called before him the said novice, telling him that he desired to hear his confession: but before ever he did confess, he recited to him all his temptation in order, even as God had revealed it to him, and concluded thus: "Son, forasmuch as you awaited my coming, and would

not depart without my blessing, God hath granted you this grace, that you shall never leave this Order, but shall die in the Order with the Divine Favor." Then the said novice was confirmed in good-will, and remaining in the Order he became a holy Monk; and Brother Hugh told all these things to me. The said Brother John, which was a man of bright and peaceful spirit, and but rarely spake, was a man of great devotion and prayer, and especially after Matins he would never return into his cell, but would tarry in the church praying until day. And he being at prayer one night after Matins, the Angel of the Lord appeared before him, saying: "Brother John, the end of your journey, which you have so long awaited, is at hand, and I am come to tell you in God's name that you may now ask whatsoever favor you will. And I also announce that you may choose whichsoever you will, either one day in Purgatory, or a week of torment in this world." And Brother John, choosing rather the week of torment in this world, suddenly he was afflicted with divers ills; forasmuch as he was burned with fever, and pinched hand and foot with gout, and many other ills; but that which troubled him most was, that a Demon stood before him and held in his hand a great parchment inscribed with all the sins which he had ever sinned or conceived, and said to him: "For these sins which you have wrought in thought, and with your tongue, and in deed, you are condemned to the lowest depths of Hell." And he was not mindful of any good thing which he had ever done, neither that he was in the Order, neither that he had ever been; but believed verily that he was damned even as the Demon said. Whence, when he was asked how he did, he replied: "Very ill, forasmuch as I am damned." The Brethren seeing this, they sent for a very ancient Brother, Brother Matthew of Mount Rubbiano by name, which was a holy man and very dear to this Brother John; and the said Brother Matthew, coming to him on the seventh day of his tribulation, greeted him,

and asked him how he fared. He made answer that he fared but ill, because he was damned. Then said Brother Matthew: "Remember you not that many times you have confessed to me and I have absolved you wholly of all your sins? and yet again, remember you not that you have ever served God in this Holy Order for these many years? and again, remember you not that



the merciful kindness of God exceedeth all the sins of the world, and that Christ the Blessed, our Saviour, hath paid an infinite price for our redemption? And therefore be of good cheer, for verily you are saved." And with these words, the term of his

purgation being fulfilled, the temptation departed from him, and consolation came. And with great rejoicing Brother John spake to Brother Matthew: "Forasmuch as you are weary and the hour is late, I pray you to go to your rest." And Brother Matthew would not leave him; but yet at last, at his great instance, he went from him and lay down to rest: and Brother John remained alone with the Brother who served upon him. And lo! Christ the Blessed came with exceeding great splendor, and with excessive sweet smell, according as He had promised to appear to him once again when he had greater need of Him; and He healed him of his every ill. Then Brother John with clasped hands gave thanks to God, who with wise design had thus ended his great journey of the present miserable life, committed himself to the care of Christ and rendered up his soul to God, passing from this mortal life into Eternal Life with Christ the Blessed, which he had so long desired and waited to see. And the said Brother John rests in the Convent of Brother John of the Pen.

Chapter Forty-six

HOW BROTHER PEACE BEING AT PRAYER SAW THE SOUL OF HIS BROTHER, BROTHER HUMILITY, ASCEND TO HEAVEN.

IN the aforesaid Province of the Marches, after the death of Saint Francis, were two Brothers belonging to the Order; the one was called Brother Humility and the other was called Brother Peace, the which were men of most extreme sanctity and perfection; and the one, that is Brother Humility, abode in the Convent of Soffiano, and there did die; and the other dwelt in a community belonging to another Convent quite remote therefrom. As it pleased God, Brother Peace being one day at

prayer in a solitary spot was rapt in ecstasy, and saw the soul of Brother Humility rise straight to Heaven, without any let or hindrance, even in the selfsame moment that it left the body. It then happed that after many years this Brother Peace, who remained, was placed with the Monks of the said Convent of Soffiano, where his brother had died. In those days the Brethren, at the petition of the Lords of Bruforte, exchanged the said Convent for another: wherefore among other things they did translate the relics of certain Holy Friars which had died within those walls: and coming to the sepulchre of Brother Humility, his brother, Brother Peace, took up his bones and washed them with good red wine; and then he wrapped them in a fair white napkin, and with great reverence and devotion kissed them and wept; at which the other Monks marvelled, and held him as an ill example, forasmuch as, he being a man of great sanctity, it seemed that through sensual and secular love he did weep for his brother, and that he showed more devotion towards his remains than towards those of the other Monks, who were no less holy than Brother Humility, and were worthy of as much reverence as he. And Brother Peace knowing the evil imagination of the Brethren, meekly satisfied them, saying unto them: "My beloved Brothers, marvel not if I do these things to the bones of my Brother and do them not likewise to the others, inasmuch as, blessed be God, I am not led, as you believe, by carnal love; but I have done so because that when my brother passed away from this life I, praying in a desert spot and remote from him, saw his soul rise straight into Heaven; and hence I am assured that his bones are sacred and should rest in Paradise. And had God granted me a similar assurance concerning the other Friars, I should have showed the same reverence to their bones." For the which thing the Brethren, seeing his holy and devout intention, were much edified, and praised God.

Chapter Forty-seven

OF THAT HOLY MONK TO WHOM THE MOTHER OF CHRIST APPEARED WHEN HE WAS INFIRM, AND BROUGHT HIM THREE BOXES OF ELECTUARY.

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In the aforesaid Convent of Soffiano there was of old a Gray Friar of such exceeding sanctity and grace that he seemed all divine, and oftentimes was he rapt in God. This Brother being on a certain time quite absorbed in God and exalted, forasmuch as he was notably endowed with the grace of contemplation, there came unto him birds of divers kinds, and familiarly alighted upon his shoulders, upon his head, and upon his arms, and upon his hands, and marvellously did they sing. This man was a solitary soul and but rarely spake; but when he was questioned concerning aught, he made answer so graciously and so prudently that he seemed rather an Angel than a man; and he was most fervent in prayer and contemplation; and the Brothers held him in great reverence. This Brother having fulfilled the course of his virtuous life, according to Divine ordinance, he fell ill even unto death, insomuch that naught could he take; and therewithal he would receive no carnal medicine, but all his faith he put in the Heavenly Physician, Jesus Christ the Blessed, and in His Blessed Mother; thereby he merited the divine clemency of being mercifully visited and healed. Hence he being once in his bed and making ready for death with all his heart, and with all due devotion, there appeared unto him the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, with an exceeding great multitude of Angels and Holy Virgins, with wondrous splendor. She drew nigh unto his bed: whence he gazing upon her was most greatly comforted and rejoiced, both in soul and in body; and he began to pray humbly that She would pray Her beloved Son that through His merits He would release him from the prison-house of this wretched flesh. And persevering in this prayer with many

tears, the Virgin Mary replied to him, calling him by name, and saying: "Doubt not, son, forasmuch as your prayer is granted, and I am come to comfort you a little before that you depart hence from this life." There were with the Virgin Mary three Holy Virgins, which bore in their hands three boxes of Electuary of matchless odor and sweetness. Then the glorious Virgin took and opened one of those boxes, and all the house was filled full of the smell; and taking a small portion of that Electuary in a spoon, She gave it to the sick man: who, so soon as he had received it, felt such great comfort and ease that it seemed as his soul could no longer abide within his body; whence he began to say: "No more, O most holy and blessed Virgin Mother! O blessed Healer and Saviour of mankind, no more! for I am unable to endure such sweetness." But the pious and benign Mother still offering that Electuary to the sick man and constraining him to take it, emptied all that box. Then the first box being emptied, the beatific Virgin took the second and laid the spoon therein to give to him; whereat he did lament, saying: "O most blessed Mother of God! my soul is almost melted away by the strength and sweetness of the first Electuary, and how may I endure the second? I pray you, blessed above all Saints and all Angels, that you will be pleased to give me no more." The glorious Virgin Mary answered: "Taste, my son, but a little of this second box." And giving him a little, she said: "Now, son, you have so much as may suffice; be comforted, O son, for I will come for you ere long, and will lead you to the kingdom of my Son, which you have ever sought and desired." And saying this, taking leave of him, She departed thence; and he was left so consoled and comforted by the sweetness of that confection, that for several days more he survived sated and strong, and partaking of no bodily food. And after some days, joyously discoursing with the Brethren, with great jubilee and rejoicing, he passed away from this miserable life.

Chapter Forty-eight

HOW BROTHER JAMES OF MASSA SAW IN A VISION ALL THE GRAY FRIARS OF THE WORLD, AFTER THE FASHION OF A TREE, AND DID KNOW THE VIRTUES AND THE VICES OF EVERY ONE.

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BROTHER JAMES OF MASSA, to whom God opened the way to His mysteries, and gave him perfect wisdom and understanding of the Divine Scriptures and of future things, was of such great sanctity, that Brother Guy of Assisi, and Brother Mark of Montino, and Brother Juniper, and Brother Lucius said of him that they knew no man in the world more familiar with God than this Brother James. Great was my desire to see him; forasmuch as I, praying Brother John, the Companion of the said Brother Guy, that he would expound to me certain spiritual matters, he said to me: "If you would be well informed concerning the life of the Spirit, make shift to have speech with Brother James of Massa": forasmuch as Brother Guy longed to be informed of him, and no man was able either to add or to take away from his words, not one jot or tittle, and his words are the words of the Holy Ghost, and there is no man on the earth whom I so much desire to see. This Brother James, in the beginning of the ministry of Brother John of Parma, praying was once rapt in God, and remained three days in this state of ecstasy, deprived of all bodily sense, and was so lifeless that the Brethren doubted whether he were not dead; and in this trance God revealed to him the future of our Order: for the which thing, when I heard it, my desire to hear him and to speak with him did but wax ever greater. And when it pleased God that I should have occasion to talk with him, I besought him thus: "If those things be true which I have heard of thee, I prythee keep them not hidden from me. I have heard that when you didst lie three days as one dead, among other things which

God revealed unto thee was that which was to befall this our Order; and this was I told by Brother Matthew, preacher in the Marches, to whom thou didst reveal it in compliance with thy vows of Obedience." Then Brother James with great humility acknowledged that the words of Brother Matthew were true. His words, that is, those of Brother Matthew, the preacher in the Marches, were these: "I know, Brother, unto whom God hath made known that which shall befall our Order, forasmuch as Brother James of Massa hath published and told me, that after many things which God revealed to him concerning the future state of the Church Militant, he saw in a vision a beauteous and very great tree, whose roots were made of gold, the fruits which hung upon its boughs were men, and they all were Gray Friars, the chief branches being divided according to the number of the Provinces of the Order; and upon each branch hung so many Friars as there were in the Province appropriated to that branch; and thus he knew the number of all the Friars in the Order, and of each Province, and also their names and ages and conditions, and the great offices and dignities and especial graces belonging to each, and their offences. And he saw Brother John of Parma at the highest tip of the midmost bough of this tree; and in the topmost twigs of the branches, which grew about this midmost branch, stood the ministers of every Province. And after this he saw Christ seated upon a great white throne; and Christ called Saint Francis to sit beside him, and gave him a Chalice full of the Water of Life, and sent him forth, saying: 'Go, visit your Brethren, and give them to drink of this Cup of the Water of Life; forasmuch as the spirit of Satan shall rise up against them and shall dash them down, and many among them shall fall and shall not rise again.' And Christ gave to Saint Francis two Angels which should walk beside him. And then came Saint Francis to offer the Cup of Life to his Brethren: and he did first offer it to Brother John of Parma, who,

taking, drank it all, every drop, devoutly and in haste; and suddenly he became luminous as the sun. And after him successively Saint Francis offered it to all the rest: and there were but few among them who with due reverence and devotion did take and drink it all. They who took it piously and drank it all, every drop, straightway became splendid as the sun; and they which spilled it on the ground and received it not with meet piety, became black, or dark and misshapen, and horrible to look upon: they that drank a part and poured out a part became partly luminous and partly shadowed, and in greater or less degree, according to the measure of that that they drank and squandered; but more than all the rest the aforesaid Brother John shone resplendent, which most complacently had drank the Cup of Life, whereby he had most deeply contemplated the abyss of infinite light, and therein had perceived the adversity and tempest which were to arise against the said tree, to shake and agitate its branches. Wherefore the said Brother John departed from the tip of the bough whereon he stood, and descending downwards through all the boughs, did hide himself amid the great limbs of the tree close to the trunk, and there abode in pensive mood: and a certain Brother, which had taken a portion of the Cup and had squandered a part, mounted up to that branch and that twig whence Brother John did descend. And being on the said twig, the nails of his hands were changed to sharp and piercing steel, like unto razors: upon which he did move from that place whither he had climbed, and with force and fury would fain have thrown himself upon the said Brother John to do him an injury; but Brother John seeing this, cried out in a loud voice, and confided himself to the care of Christ, which sat upon the throne; and Christ at his call summoned Saint Francis, and gave him a sharp flint stone, and said to him: 'Go with this stone and cut the nails of yonder Friar, with which he would fain claw Brother John, to the end that he may do no

manner of harm to any man.' Then Saint Francis came and did even as Christ did command him. And this done, there came a whirlwind, and shook the tree so sore that the Brothers fell to earth; and the first to fall were they who had spilled all the Cup of the Water of Life, and were borne thence by Demons to realms of darkness and torment. But Brother John, together with the others which had drunk all the Cup, were translated of Angels to the abode of Life and Eternal Light and of Beatific Splendor. And the aforesaid Brother James, who saw the vision, understood and knew particularly and distinctly that which he saw, reading clearly the names and conditions and states of each. And so long endured that tempest about the tree, that it fell, and the wind bore it away. And then so soon as the tempest did cease to rage, from the root of that tree, which was of gold, sprang forth another tree, which was all of gold, which brought forth flowers and fruits and foliage of gold. Of the which tree, and of its increase, size, beauty, odor, and virtues, it is better to be silent than to speak at this present."

Chapter Forty-nine

HOW CHRIST APPEARED IN A VISION TO BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA.

AMONG the other wise and holy Brothers and sons of Saint Francis, who, as Solomon saith, are the glory of their Father, there lived in our times, and in the said Province of the Marches, the venerable and holy Brother John of Fermo, the which, by reason of the great space that he abode in the Holy Convent of Vernia, and for that he there passed away out of this life, was also called Brother John of Vernia, forasmuch as he was a man of rare life and of great sanctity. This Brother John, being a layman and yet a child, desired with all his heart to follow the way of true repentance, which should keep his

soul and body clean and pure; hence, being but a little lad, he began to bear about him a breastplate and an iron belt next his skin, and to keep great fasts, and especially when he sojourned with the Canons of Saint Peter of Fermo, which lived splendidly, he would shun sensual delights, and mortify his flesh with most rigid fastings. But his companions being most contrary to him in this, tearing from him his breastplate and hindering him in divers fashions from fasting, he, inspired of God, bethought him to forsake the world and its lovers, and to cast himself wholly into the arms of Christ crucified, with the habit of the crucified Saint Francis; and even so he did. And being received into the Order thus young, and committed to the care of the Master of the Novices, he became so spiritual and devout, that once on a time hearing the said Master discourse of God, his heart melted within him like wax before the fire; and with such exceeding sweet grace was he warmed by Divine Love, that he, not able steadfastly to endure such great suavity, rose up, and, like a man drunk in spirit, ran hither and thither, now through the garden, now the wood, and now the church, according as the flame and fury of the spirit did urge him on. Then in the course of time Divine Grace did make this angelic man to grow from virtue to virtue, and in celestial gifts and divine exaltation and ecstasies, insomuch that at certain times his mind was exalted to the splendors of the Cherubim, at other times to the joys of the Blessed, and yet again to the loving and extraordinary embrace of Christ. And especially upon a certain day was the flame of Divine Love once kindled in his heart, and this fire burned within him for the space of three years, in which time he received marvellous consolations and Divine visitations and was oftentimes rapt in God; and did speedily appear all on fire and aflame with the love of Christ: and this was on the holy Mount of Vernia. But inasmuch as God is strangely watchful of his children, giving them, according to

the various necessities, now consolation, now tribulation, now prosperity, and now adversity, according as He sees it needful to uphold them in the way of humility, or the more to enkindle their desire after celestial things, it pleased the Divine Bounty, after the three years, to take away from the said Brother John that bright beam and that flame of Divine Love, and to deprive him of all spiritual consolation. For the which Brother John was left without light and without the love of God, and was quite comfortless and afflicted and sad; wherefore he wandered through the wood, roaming hither and yon, calling with groans and tears and sighs to the beloved Spouse of his soul, which had hidden Himself and departed from him, and without whose presence his soul could find no rest neither any repose: but in no place, neither in any manner, could he meet his sweet Jesus, or again recover those most dear and divine delights of the love of Christ, which had been his wont. And this tribulation endured for many days; during which he persevered in continual weeping and sighing, and in praying God that of His pity He would restore to him the beloved Spouse of his soul. At the last, when it pleased God to have sufficiently proved his patience and inflamed his desire, one day, as Brother John walked in the said wood thus troubled and afflicted, he sat down to rest in sheer languor, leaning against a beech-tree, with his face all bathed in tears, gazing Heavenward, and lo! suddenly there appeared Jesus Christ close beside him in the very path by which Brother John came thither, but saying naught. Brother John seeing Him and knowing Him well, that He was Christ, suddenly threw himself at His feet and with inordinate tears most humbly besought Him, saying: "Help me, Lord, for without Thee, my sweetest Saviour, I live in darkness and in the midst of tears; without Thee, most meek and gentle Lamb, I live in anguish, in pain and fear; without Thee, Son of God Most High, I live in confusion and shame; without Thee I am stripped of every

good, and blind, forasmuch as Thou art Christ Jesus, True Light of souls; without Thee I am lost and damned, forasmuch as Thou art the Spiritual Life, and the very Life of Life; without Thee I am withered and dry, forasmuch as Thou art the Fountain of every gift and every grace; without Thee I am all comfortless, forasmuch as Thou art Jesus, our redemption, love, and desire, the Bread that doth comfort, and the Vine that maketh to rejoice the hearts of Angels and the hearts of all the Saints. Shine upon me, most gracious Master and most loving Shepherd, forasmuch as I am Thy lamb, unworthy though I am." But to the end that the desire of holy men, unto which our Lord is slow to hearken, might be kindled unto greater love and merit, Christ the Blessed departed thence and left him unheard, neither spake He any word, and went His way along that selfsame path. Then Brother John rose up, and hastened after him, and yet again did fall at His feet, and with a holy importunity did hold Him by His garment, and with most pious tears besought Him, saying: "O sweetest Jesus Christ, have mercy upon my tribulation; hearken unto me for the abundance of Thy mercy, and for the truth of Thy salvation, and give me back the light of Thy countenance and of Thy loving kindness, forasmuch as the whole earth is full of Thy merciful deeds." And Christ departed from him yet again, and spake not to him, neither gave He him any consolation; and He did even as the mother doth to her child, when she lets him long for her breast, and lures him to pursue her with weeping, to the end that so he may take it more gladly. At which Brother John once more with greater fervor and desire followed after Christ; and having drawn nigh to Him, Christ the Blessed turned to him, and looked upon him with a gracious and smiling countenance; and opening His most holy and merciful arms, He did most sweetly embrace him. And in that opening of His arms Brother John saw rays of resplendent light to issue from the most Sacred Breast of the

Saviour, the which lighted all the wood and pierced his very soul and body. Then Brother John knelt at Christ's feet; and the Blessed Jesus, even as He did to Magdalen, gave him His foot to kiss. And Brother John, taking it with supreme reverence, bathed it in so many tears that verily he seemed another Magdalen; and he cried devoutly: "I pray Thee, O Lord, that Thou wilt not regard my sins, but by Thy most Holy Passion, and by the shedding of Thy most Precious and Holy Blood, that Thou wilt revive my soul by the grace of Thy Love; since this is Thy command, that we love Thee with all our hearts and with all our minds; which command can none fulfil without Thy aid. Aid me, then, most beloved Son of God, for I love Thee with my whole heart and my whole strength." And Brother John, entreating thus at Christ's feet, was heard of Him, and again received from Him his former grace, which is the flame of Divine love, and felt himself quite consoled and renewed; and knowing the gift of Divine grace to have returned into him, he began to give thanks unto Christ the Blessed, and devoutly to kiss His feet. And then rising up to gaze upon the face of Christ, Jesus Christ stretched forth and offered him His most Sacred Hands to kiss: and when that Brother John had kissed them, he drew near and fell upon Christ's bosom and embraced and kissed Him; and Jesus likewise did embrace and kiss him. And in these kisses and embraces Brother John enjoyed such Divine odors, that had all the odoriferous delights and all the perfumed things of earth been conjoined together, they would have seemed but an evil stench in comparison with that smell; and therein Brother John was rapt and consoled and enlightened, and that smell dwelt in his soul for many months. And thenceforth, from his mouth, which had drank of the Fountain of Divine Wisdom in the Sacred Bosom of the Saviour, came forth marvellous and celestial words, which turned all hearts; and they that heard him reaped much spiritual harvest: and in the path in the wood

wherein had strayed the Blessed Feet of Christ, and for a good space round about, Brother John did ever smell that smell, and see that splendor, whensoever he returned thither for a great time thereafter. Brother John returning again to himself after that ecstasy, and the bodily presence of Christ being vanished, he remained so enlightened in soul, in the depth of his divinity, that albeit he was no scholar by human study, nevertheless he did miraculously solve and expound the most subtle and profound questions concerning the Divine Trinity and the deep mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. And many times thereafter, speaking before the Pope and his Cardinals, and before the King and his Nobles, and the Doctors and learned Men of the Law, he put them all in great amaze by the wise decrees and lofty words which he did utter.

Chapter Fifty

HOW, SAYING MASS UPON ALL SOULS' DAY, BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA SAW MANY SOULS SET FREE FROM PURGATORY.

THE said Brother John, once saying Mass upon All Souls' Day, for all the souls of them that are dead, according as the Church hath decreed, offered up the most noble Sacrament with such loving-kindness and such pious compassion that for its efficacy the souls of the dead desired above any other good that he might be chosen of all men to say service for them; for he seemed to melt quite away in the sweetness of his pity and brotherly love. For the which thing, as he did devoutly raise aloft the Body of Christ in that Mass, offering it unto God the Father, and praying Him that for love of His Blessed Son Jesus Christ, Which hung upon the Cross to buy back souls, He would be pleased to set free from the pains of Purgatory the souls of the dead, created and redeemed by Him, straightway he saw

an almost infinite number of souls rise up out of Purgatory, as they had been countless sparks of fire flying up from a burning furnace; and he saw them go up into Heaven, through the merits of Christ's Passion, which is every day offered up for the quick and the dead in that most Sacred Host, worthy to be adored in *saecula saeculorum.*

Chapter Fifty-one

OF THE HOLY BROTHER JAMES OF FALLERONE; AND HOW, BEFORE HE DIED, HE DID APPEAR TO BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA.

At the time when Brother James of Fallerone, a man of much sanctity, lay very ill at the Convent of Moliano in the territory of Fermo, Brother John of Vernia, who was then abiding at the Convent of Massa, hearing of his affliction, forasmuch as he loved him like his own dear father, fell to praying for him, devoutly entreating God in silent prayer that He would make whole the body of the said Brother James, if it were for his soul's best good; and praying thus devoutly, he was rapt in ecstasy, and saw in mid-air a vast army of Angels and Saints above his cell, which was in the wood, encompassed with such splendor that all the region round about was lighted up with the glory thereof; and among these Angels he saw the sick Brother James, for whom he prayed, arrayed in white and shining robes. He also saw among them the blessed Father Saint Francis, adorned with the Sacred Stigmata of Christ, and of exceeding lustre. He also saw and recognized Holy Brother Lucius, and Brother Matthew the Prior of Mount Rubiano, and many more Friars, the which he had never seen nor known in this life. And Brother John gazing thus with great delight, as was his wont, upon that blessed band of Saints, there was revealed to him as a verity the Spiritual Salvation of the said sick Brother, and that

he must needs die of his disease; but he should not go straight to Paradise after death, inasmuch as it beseemed him first to purge his sins a little space in Purgatory. At the which revelation Brother John did so greatly rejoice for that soul's salvation that he heeded not the death of the body, but with great sweetness of spirit called him softly, saying:



"Brother James, my dear father; Brother James, my dear brother; Brother James, most faithful servant and friend of God; Brother James, Companion of Angels and Consort of the Blessed." And thus in this assurance and cheer he returned again to himself,

and incontinently did set forth from the Convent and go to visit the said Brother James at Moliano; and finding him so heavily burdened that he could scarce speak, he announced to him the death of his body and the glory and salvation of his soul, according to the assurance which he had received through Divine revelation; at which Brother James, much rejoiced in soul and in aspect, received him with great cheer and with a jocund laugh, thanking him for the good tidings he did bring, and devoutly recommending himself to his prayers. Then Brother John besought him dear, that after his death he would return and speak to him concerning his condition; and Brother James gave him his promise so to do, if it should thus please God. And having said these words, the hour of his passing away drew near, and Brother James began piously to recite that verse of the Psalms: *In pace in idipsum dormiam, et requiescam;* which is to say: I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; and having repeated this verse, with a light and jocund face he passed away from this life. And after that he was buried, Brother John travelled thence to the Convent of Massa, and awaited the promise of Brother James that he would return again to him upon the day which he had named. But on the said day, he being at prayer, Christ did appear unto him with a great company of Angels and of Saints, among whom Brother James was not; whence Brother John, marvelling much, recommended him fervently to Christ. Then the day following thereafter, Brother John praying in the wood, Brother James did appear to him accompanied by the Angels, all glorious and all bright, and Brother John said to him: "O dearest father, why did you not return again unto me upon the day which you did name?" Brother James replied: "Forasmuch as I had need of certain purgation; but in that same hour that Christ appeared to you, and you did recommend me to His care, Christ heard you and delivered me out of all punishment. And then I appeared unto Brother James of Massa, a lay

saint, which was serving at Mass, and saw the Consecrated Wafer, when the Priest did raise it up, converted and changed into the form of a most beauteous living boy, and said to him: 'I go this day with this same child unto the realm of Eternal Life, whence can none go without him.' " And saying these words, Brother James disappeared, and rose up to Heaven with all that blessed company of Angels; and Brother John was left greatly comforted. The said Brother James of Fallerone died upon the eve of the day of Saint James the Apostle, in the month of July, at the aforesaid Convent of Moliano; wherein for his merits the Divine Bounty wrought many miracles after his death.

Chapter Fifty-two

OF THE VISION OF BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA, WHEREIN HE KNEW THE WHOLE ORDER OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

THE aforesaid Brother John of Vernia, forasmuch as he had perfectly abjured every mundane and temporal comfort and delight, and had put all his pleasure and all his hope in God, Divine Bounty gave him wondrous consolations and revelations, especially at the high feasts of Christ; whence the solemn feast of Christ's Nativity once drawing nigh, whereon he surely awaited comfort from God in the sweet humanity of Jesus, the Holy Ghost poured into his soul such great and excessive love and longing for the brotherly affection of Christ, through the which He did abase Himself to take on our humanity, that verily it seemed as his soul had been dragged from his body and were burning like to a furnace. Unable to endure which ardor, he grieved and melted apace, and cried out in a loud voice, forasmuch as through the force of the Holy Ghost, and through the overmuch fervor of his love, he could not longer

restrain his cries. And in that same hour when that measureless fervor came upon him, with it came so strong and sure a hope of his salvation, that he could not in any manner believe that if he were dead he must needs pass through the pains of Purgatory; and this love endured in him full six months, albeit that excessive fervor was not continual, but came upon him at certain hours of the day. And at this time he did receive marvellous visitations and consolations of God: and oftentimes was he rapt, as he was seen of that Brother which first wrote down these things; among which, he was one night so mightily exalted and rapt in God that he saw in Him the Creator of all created things both celestial and terrestrial, and all their perfections and degrees and various orders. And then he knew clearly how every created thing looketh in the eye of its Creator, and how Our Lord is above, and within, and without, and beneath all created things. He also saw and knew one God in three Persons, and three Persons in one God, and the infinite loving-kindness which did make the Son of God incarnate through obedience to the Father. And lastly and finally, he knew in that vision how that there is no other way by which the Soul can journey to God and have Eternal Life, save only through Christ the Blessed, which is the Way and the Truth and the Life of the Soul.

Chapter Fifty-three

HOW, SAYING MASS, BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA FELL AS ONE DEAD.

TO THE said Brother John, as he did abide in the aforesaid Convent of Moliano, there did hap on a certain time this wondrous chance, as those Brethren which were present do relate; for the first sennight after the feast of Saint Lorenzo, and during the sennight of the Assumption of Our Lady, he

having said Matins in Church with the other Friars, and the unction of Divine Grace coming unlooked for upon him, he went forth into the garden to meditate upon Christ's Passion and to prepare himself to celebrate with all due piety the Mass which it was his duty that morning to sing; and pondering the words of the consecration of the Body of Christ, that is, considering the infinite Compassion of Christ, which led Him to redeem mankind, not only with His most Precious Blood, but also to leave with us His most Worthy Body and Blood as food for our hungry souls, his love of the sweet Jesus began to wax within him in such fervor and such suavity that his soul could no longer endure such piercing sweetness; but he cried aloud, and as one drunk in spirit ceased not from saying, *Hoc est corpus meum:* forasmuch as saying these words he seemed to see the Blessed Christ with the Virgin Mary and a multitude of Angels, and as he said these words he was enlightened of the Holy Ghost concerning all the deep and lofty mysteries of that most high Sacrament. And at day dawn he entered the Church with that fervent spirit and with that selfsame anxious pang, and repeated ever those same words, thinking himself heard of none and seen of none; but a certain Monk knelt in the choir at prayer, which heard and saw all. And unable in that ardor to restrain himself, through the abundance of Divine Grace, he cried out in a loud voice, and so long he did continue thus, that it was the hour to say the Mass; wherefore he went to trim the altar; and beginning Mass, the farther he proceeded so much the more grew his love of Christ and that fervor of devotion with which he was given a sense of the ineffable God such as he himself knew not, nor could express it after with his tongue. Wherefore he, fearing lest that fervor and sense of God should wax so great that he must need leave the Mass unsaid, was greatly troubled, and knew not which part to choose; whether to proceed with the Mass, or to stay and await what might befall. But forasmuch as

another time a similar chance befell him, and the Lord had so tempered that ardor that he was not forced to leave the Mass unsaid, and trusting that so he might have strength to endure again, he went on and finished the Mass with great fear; and coming even so far as the Preface of Our Lady, the Divine Illumination and Gracious Suavity of the love of God began so to grow upon him, that, reaching the *Qui pridie*, he could scarce endure such excess of suavity and sweetness. Finally, attaining unto the act of consecration, and saying one half the words over the Host, that is, *Hoc est*, in no manner could he go farther, but still did repeat those selfsame words, that is, *Hoc est enim*: and the cause why he could not proceed farther was, that he felt and saw the preference of Christ with a multitude of Angels, whose majesty he could not suffer, and he saw that Christ would not enter into the Host, or rather that the Host could not be transubstantiated into the Body of Christ, unless he did utter the other half of the words, that is, *corpus meum*. At the which he, lingering thus in anguish, and not proceeding farther, the Prior and the other Monks, and even many laymen which were in the Church to hear the Mass, hastened towards the altar; and they stood affrighted as they saw and considered the acts of Brother John, and many among them wept for pure piety. At last after a great space, that is, when it pleased God, Brother John uttered the words, *enim corpus meum*, in a loud voice; and suddenly the form of the Wafer vanished, and Jesus Christ the Blessed appeared within the Host incarnate and glorified, and set forth unto him the humility and charity which did incarnate Him of the Virgin Mary, and which daily maketh Him to descend into the hands of the Priest when he doth consecrate the Host; whereby he was the more exalted in sweetness of contemplation. Hence, having lifted up the Host and consecrated Cup, he was rapt out of himself; and his soul having lost all sensual and fleshly sense, his body did fall backwards; and if that the Prior had not

held him in his arms as he stood behind him, he would have fallen to the ground. At which the Brethren drawing nigh, together with those laymen which were in the Church, both men and women, he was borne away thence into the sacristy like unto one dead, forasmuch as his body was quite cold, and the fingers of his hands were clenched so close that they had much ado to spread or move them. And in this manner he did lie as one senseless, or rather rapt, even until Tierce, and so remained. And forasmuch as I, who was present at these things, desired mightily to know those things which God had wrought in him, straightway that he did return to himself I did go in to him, and did pray him for the love of God that he would tell me all. Hence he, because he had great faith in me, did narrate to me all in order: and among other things which he told me, he declared that as he considered the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus which were before him, his heart was liquefied like unto well-tempered wax, and it seemed as his flesh were deprived of bones, in such manner that he could not lift either hand or arm to make the sign of the Cross above the Chalice. So, too, he told me that before ever he became a Priest it was revealed to him of God that he should but seldom go to Mass; but inasmuch as he had already said many Masses, and this thing had never yet befallen him, he bethought himself that the revelation came not from God. And nevertheless some fifty days before the Assumption of Our Lady, whereon the aforesaid chance befell him, he did receive yet another revelation of God, telling him that this chance should befall him on or about the said feast of the Assumption; but he remembered not thereafter the said vision, or rather revelation, made to him by Our Lord.



HERE ENDETH THE BOOK TREATING
OF THE VENERABLE ST. FRANCIS AND
THE HOLY FRIARS HIS COMPANIONS.
THE TEXT HAS BEEN SET IN WEISS
TYPES, AND IT HAS BEEN PRINTED
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